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PASSING THE TORCH
The guitars that changed hands between Clapton, Townshend, Page and more...

INTERVIEWED
Eric Johnson
Killswitch Engage
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REVIEWED
Fender • James Trussart • Milkman Sound
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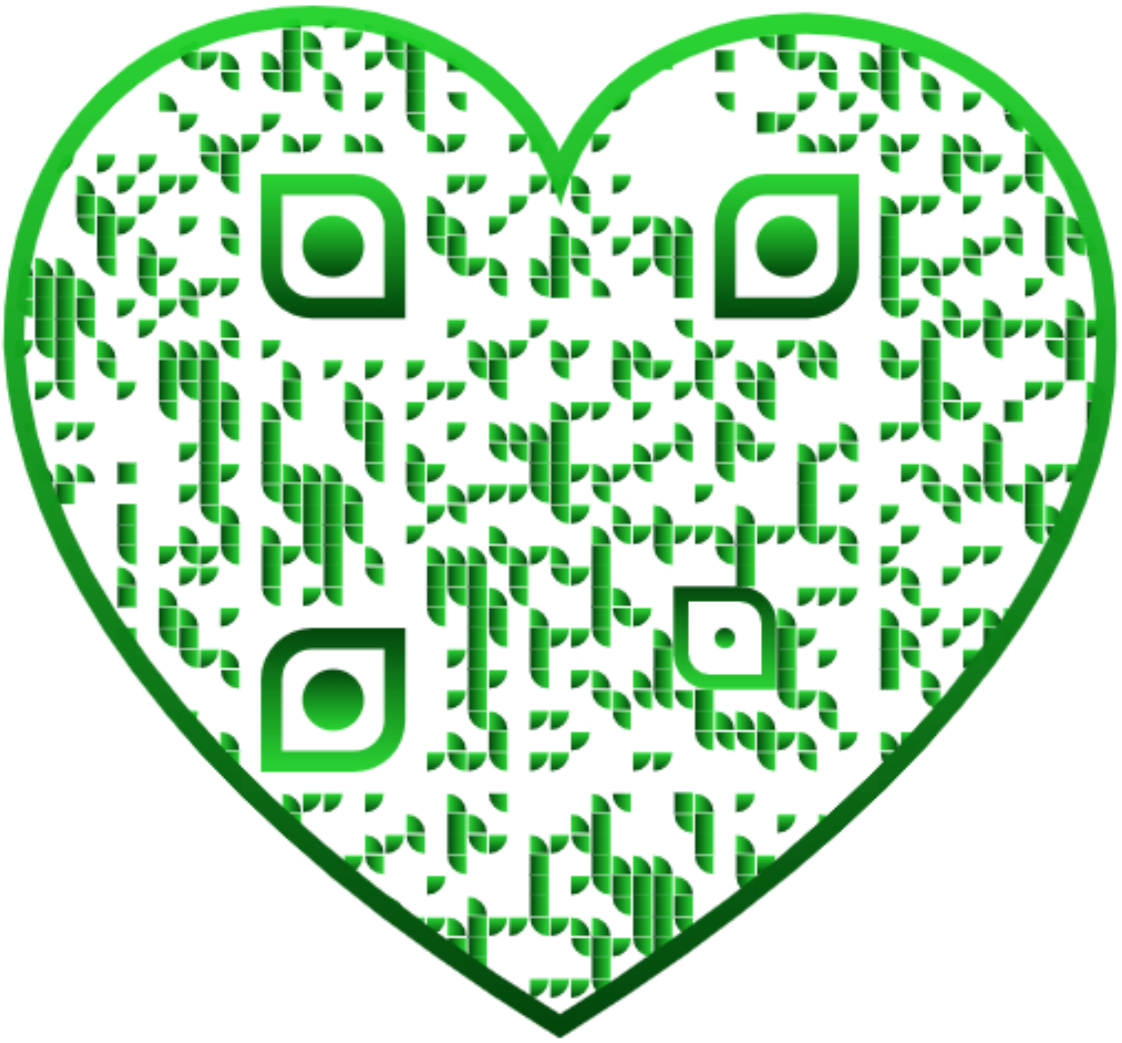

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The one that got away

After a couple of days at the Summer NAMM Show in Nashville back in June, my tired ears pricked up as a result of a guitar sound emanating from the booth of one of the many boutique guitar builders exhibiting their wares on the show floor. A sublime blend of depth, bite and clarity, it was a simply wonderful tone – the best I'd heard in some time. The fact that the demo guitarist responsible certainly knew his way around the faux-aged S-type he was cradling was an undeniably significant factor, but the quality of the amplifier seemed to be contributing to the magic in no small way.

That a blonde 1963 Fender Bassman piggyback head and cab sounded very good indeed was no revelation, but what was galling was that I used to own a very similar amp. Almost identical, in fact. The best tone I'd heard for ages was one that I used to have access to, until I foolishly offloaded the Bassman in exchange for who-knows-what well over a decade ago. Bugger.

Everyone has their 'one that got away' – I've had several, don't even get me started on the sunburst 1973 Telecaster Custom that was super-light and rang like a bell – but some solace can be found in the knowledge that the pros have them, too. Check out our feature entitled Passing The Torch on p25 to read about the celebrity wheeler-dealing that has seen some of the most legendary guitars in rock 'n' roll history pass through many hands over the years. Is there a guitar or amp that you've loved and lost that you'd give anything to get back? Write in and let us know and we'll print the best stories. Until next month...

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THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS...

DAVE HUNTER

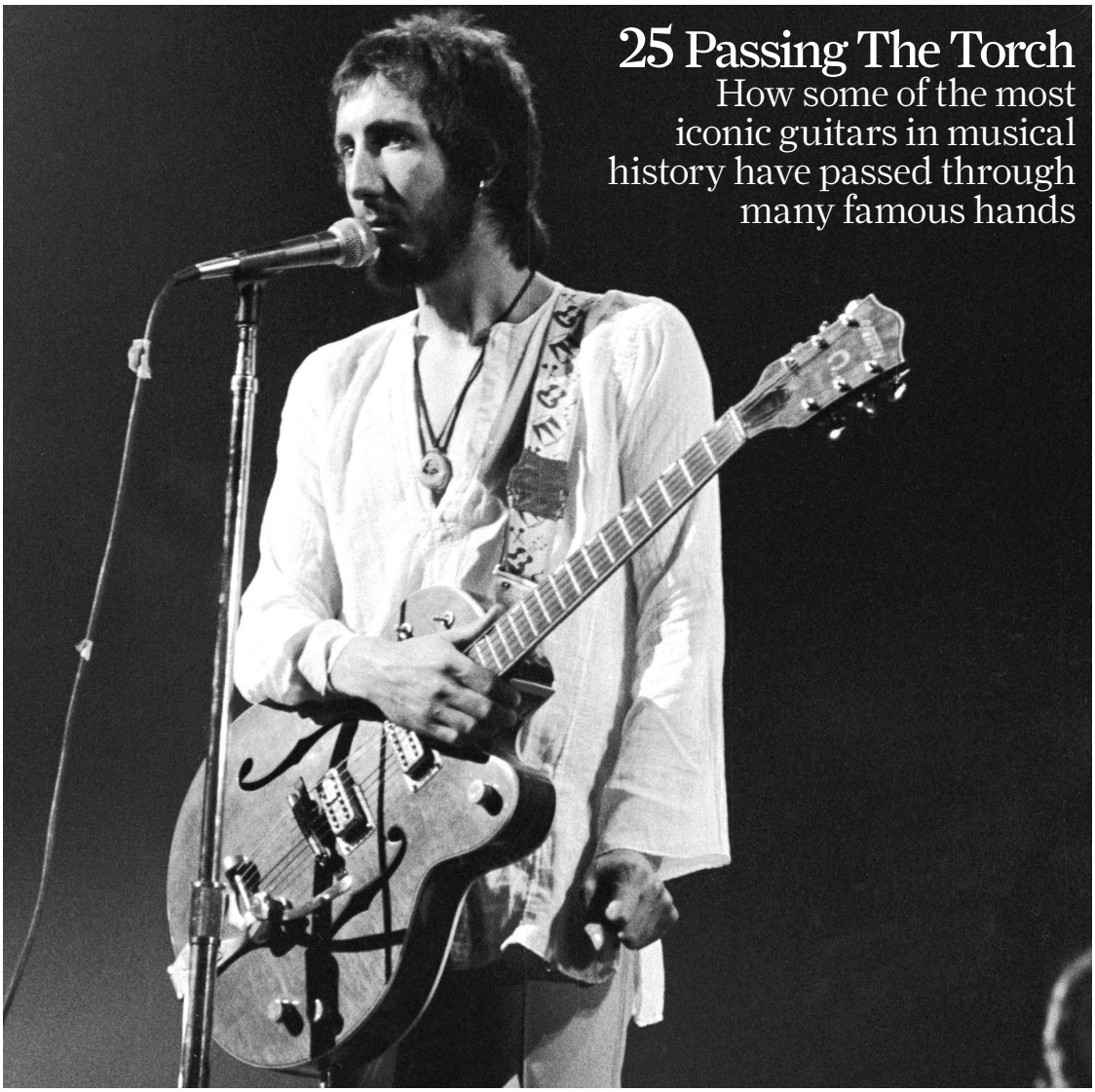
Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*. Check out his column on page 10.

HUW PRICE

Huw spent 16 years as a pro audio engineer working with the likes of David Bowie, Primal Scream and NIck Cave. His book *Recording Guitar & Bass* was published in 2002, sparking a career in guitar journalism. He also builds and maintains guitars, amps and FX.

RICHARD PURVIS

A reformed drummer, Richard has been gigging for over 20 years as a guitarist and bassist, and working as a music journalist for almost as long. He also composes music for television, and is legally married to his 1966 Gibson Melody Maker.



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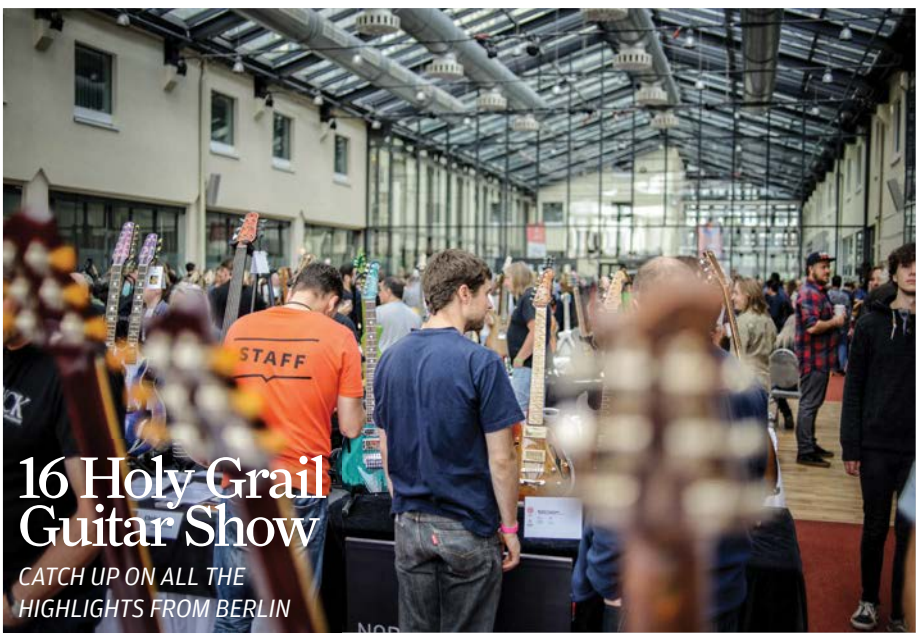

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Emerging talent on *G&B*'s radar and a chance to win a Faith Neptune electro-acoustic

ONES TO WATCH

Wizards of Aus

BLACK ACES

Black Aces have a hard-rocking sound that's quintessentially Australian, but they're targeting UK success after releasing debut album *Shot In The Dark* and completing an extensive European tour that included nine British dates.

The tour was a first foray onto these shores for the Melbourne band, who make no secret of their love for classic Australian acts such as AC/DC and Rose Tattoo and have been endorsed by another Antipodean act, Airbourne, who said recently of Black Aces: "They remind me of us in our early days when I see them live, giving it their all."

Guitarist Tyler Kinder tells *G&B* that while Black Aces were inspired by those classic Aussie influences, it's success in Britain that the band have their eye on. "We've been getting some great reviews and the response has been really positive. It's good that we're getting that response in the UK and Europe because that's where we need to be.

"Bands like AC/DC and The Angels, growing up that was what we listened to and wanted to do. There are a lot of British influences, like Thin Lizzy, The Rolling Stones and Motörhead too, but growing up in Australia you can't turn a corner without hearing a song by AC/DC or Rose Tattoo. I remember being kids and singing along to *TNT* – it's all we've ever watned to do. Hearing *High Voltage* was a life-changing moment for me. I remember being 13, putting it on and it blowing my mind. Since then, it's been everything we want to do. Looking at Australian bands before us, like Airbourne and AC/DC, to make it in Europe is when you've made it, and that's always been our goal since we started the band – to break into the UK and Europe. We were inspired by bands like Airbourne, and If you put in the hard yards and the hard work you can do it.

"We've known the guys in Airbourne for a few years now, just from drinking in bars around Melbourne and going to shows, and for them to have said that is a real vindication for what we've been doing. To get that approval from someone you've looked up to is great."

Black Aces' roots reach all the way back to high school, where they first met, although they've been through several line-up changes along the way. Despite that long history, the band were determined not to rush their debut album, recorded with producer Craig Harnath at Hothouse Studios in Melbourne. The result is a ballsy traditional rock 'n' roll affair.

"It took a long time to get the line-up right," says Kinder. "We had a lot of people come and go over the years. We've always wanted to sound the way we do now, it was just a matter of getting the right songs. We didn't want to rush into anything and bring out an album of B-grade material. Once the songs were there, it was a case of 'let's go'."

Harnath was a straightforward decision to produce the record, after his work with Australian rock bands Midnight Oil and Rose Tattoo, and the Neve console at the studio was used by AC/DC on their classic *Dirty Deeds* album. "From the early days, we'd always wanted to record at Hothouse because bands we'd looked up to like Airbourne, Jet, The Casanovas and Dallas Crane had recorded there and it's great for getting a good old-school Australian rock guitar sound," says Kinder.

"We did all the tracking in seven days, which is the fastest album ever done there – we beat Airbourne by a day! We rehearsed and rehearsed and rehearsed before we went in. I think that gives it a raw tightness.

"Craig's great, he's worked with everyone. He's really down the line, and if you're playing something that's not there he'll tell you straight away it's not good enough. If you drift into a solo and it's not good enough, he'll say 'I can't imagine Ted Nugent playing that, do it again!'. The efficiency is unbelievable."

That stripped-back approach to recording applies to gear, too, as Kinder explains: "We're pretty back to basics as far as gear goes. I use an SG Special and SG Standard into a Marshall JCM2000 with nothing in between, no pedals. Our other guitarist, Jazz, uses a Gibson 333 with a TV Jones pickup in it and a JCM900 that he just runs clean with no pedals. We've experimented with lots of things over time, but we always go back to a straight guitar into amp approach." **GW**

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Airbourne, AC/DC*

GEAR *Black Aces*

- **GUITARS** Gibson SG Special, Gibson SG Standard, Gibson Les Paul
- **AMPLIFIERS** Marshall JCM2000, Marshall JCM900

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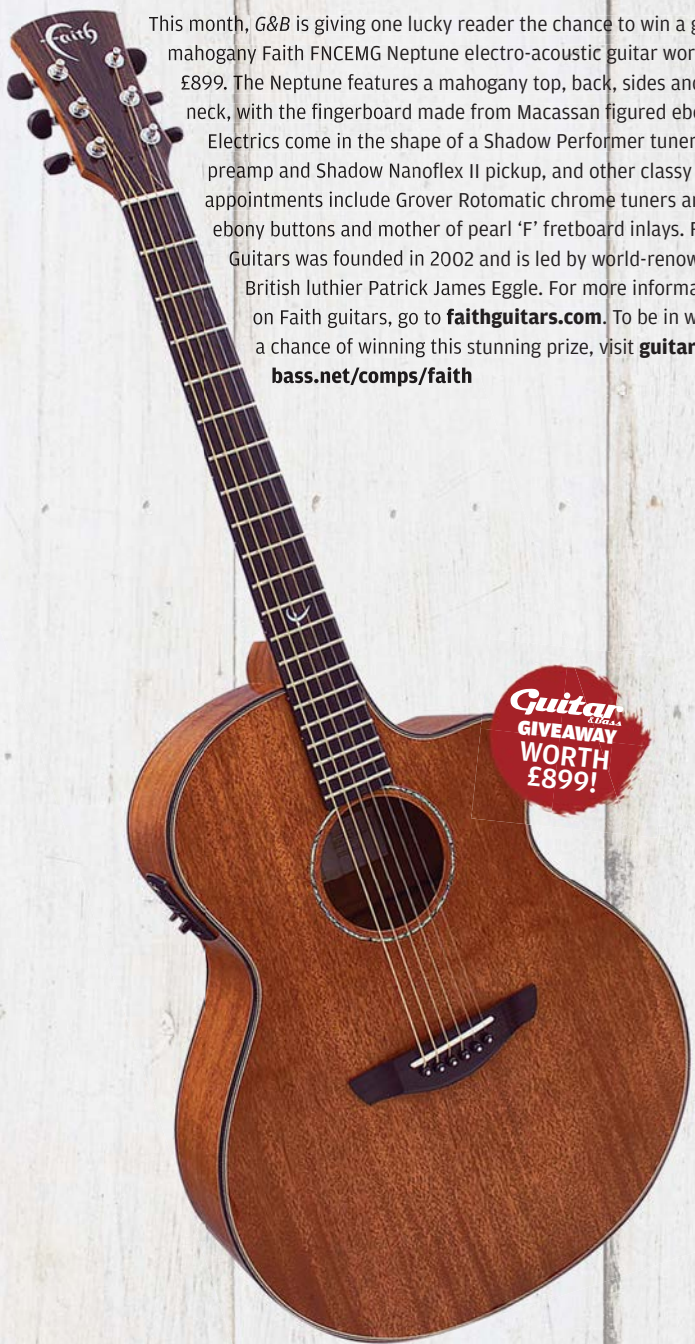

This month, *G&B* is giving one lucky reader the chance to win a gloss mahogany Faith FNCEMG Neptune electro-acoustic guitar worth £899. The Neptune features a mahogany top, back, sides and neck, with the fingerboard made from Macassan figured ebony. Electrics come in the shape of a Shadow Performer tuner preamp and Shadow Nanoflex II pickup, and other classy appointments include Grover Rotomatic chrome tuners and ebony buttons and mother of pearl 'F' fretboard inlays. Faith Guitars was founded in 2002 and is led by world-renowned British luthier Patrick James Eggle. For more information on Faith guitars, go to **faithguitars.com**. To be in with a chance of winning this stunning prize, visit **guitar-bass.net/comps/faith**

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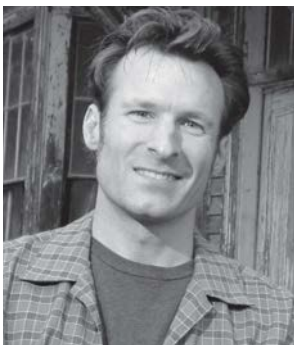
Letters from America

The true sound of a cranked valve amp at neighbour-friendly levels is a holy grail for guitar players. **DAVE HUNTER** may have the solution...



DAVE HUNTER

Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of numerous books including *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*.

Do you ever feel that we guitarists went for decades without fretting too much about decibels, yet for the past several years the main topic of discussion seems to have been how to maintain your tone while turning down the volume? From attenuators to re-ampers, to iso boxes, to load boxes with cab sims, to modelling amps, methods for achieving a 'quietly cranked' guitar tone have proliferated over the past decade and a half. Different from any of these – and one of the more logical, if unconventional, solutions – is FluxTone's Variable Magnet Technology (VMT) speakers.

Simply put, FluxTone's theory is your amp will sound more like its loud self when played quiet if you turn down the efficiency of the speaker, rather than turning down the signal between amp and speaker, and it has devised a clever piece of kit to do just that.

Efficiency drive

FluxTone's technology involves coupling a voltage-controlled electromagnet with a guitar speaker in place of its traditional fixed ferrite or alnico magnet. As such, the speaker magnet is 'powered' (and requires AC power when used as a separate unit), and can be turned down from full efficiency to –25dB, resulting in a hefty reduction of output level without tampering with the signal between amp and speaker.

Let's look at it this way: if the objective is quite simply to produce fewer decibels in the room, achieving that by creating a speaker that delivers fewer decibels from whatever unadulterated amp signal is put into it is, in FluxTone's view, better than achieving your tone and then clamping it down before the speaker.

The further theory is that the results should deliver not only the full sound of your amp, just quieter, but its unadulterated playing dynamics, too, rather than the somewhat squashy, dark and compressed tone and feel that many traditional output attenuators deliver with anything close to major level cuts.

FluxTone's technology involves coupling a voltage-controlled electromagnet with a speaker

Aesthetically, the FluxTone presents as a traditional speaker basket and cone, with an enlarged steel magnet housing on the reverse (within which the electromagnet's substantial wire windings are clearly visible). There's an umbilical cord to the Variable Magnet Control unit (VMC), which is also where you plug in your amp's output via a standard speaker cable. The VMT structure and VMC mean the addition of some weight to the package – I reckon between 4 and 6lbs depending on the speaker model – but so it goes.

FluxTone delivers its tech by one of two broad means: firstly in VMT-equipped speakers that you can mount into your own appropriate cabinets. Secondly, in the amplifiers of its sister company Denver Amp Works, which produces a range of traditional hand-wired combos with FluxTone speakers already loaded in, and its VMC 'Magnet Strength' control on the front panel for easy access.

The former are available in 18 different models, including VMT-rendered speakers licensed from Celestion, Jensen and Electro-Voice; the latter is a somewhat moveable feast, yet tends to include several classic American and British types. For review, our amp is a 22-watt 'upgraded Deluxe Reverb-alike' with several key modifications in addition to its FluxTone speaker, while our separate VMT speaker is the company's Model 1-A, a Jensen-like 'classic American toned' speaker with a ribbed cone and a small-diameter voice coil, capable of handling 50 watts.

I mounted the Model 1-A into an open-back 1x12-inch cab made from solid pine and hit it with a 30-watt Benson Chimera with four 6V6s, a custom JTM45-style amp with EL34s, and an AC15-style head with EL84s, using a

The Denver Amp Works BF DeLuxe paired with a FluxTone attenuating speaker

KEY FEATURES

Denver Amp Works BF DeLuxe 1x12 combo

- **PRICE** £2,459 (approx, excluding shipping, VAT and other duties)
- **CONTROLS** Normal channel: volume, treble, bass, pull bright; vibrato channel: volume, treble, bass, reverb, speed, intensity, pull direct, pull slow; master magnet strength control; three-way negative feedback switch
- **OUTPUT** 22 watts
- **TUBES** 4x 12AX7s, 2x 12AT7s, 2x 6V6GTs, GZ34 rectifier
- **SPEAKER** FluxTone 'Big Blue' VMT Attenuating 12" speaker
- **DIMENSIONS** 18.5"x8"x8"
- **WEIGHT** 52lbs/23.5kg

KEY FEATURES

FluxTone Model 1-A VMT attenuating speaker

- **PRICE** £749 (approx, excluding shipping, VAT and other duties)
- **POWER HANDLING** 50W
- **IMPEDANCE** 8 ohms
- **WEIGHT** 13lbs/5.8kg
- **CONTACT** fluxtone@gmail.com, www.fluxtonespeakers.com

wide variety of guitars. Turned up full, it's simply a good-sounding American-style speaker with a chimey presence and a crisp, slightly reedy voice, very much along the lines of a Jensen C12N, I'd say.

Turn down, turn up

The magic comes, however, in turning the speaker's VMC down and the amps up. Short answer: the tech works. It works great. Setting the JTM45-style head's volume to around two o'clock and turning the FluxTone's VMC to five (out of 10) makes the amp's raw vintage grind entirely tolerable in a home-studio or small-club environment, without noticeably changing the character or dynamics of the amp. Driving less power into a speaker cone will, of course, result in a slightly different sound, and driving less volume into the air will lead your ears to perceive your tone differently, too (investigate 'Fletcher-Munson' for the big picture on the effects of sound-pressure levels on aural perception). But, as for 'same tone at different volumes', yeah, the FluxTone works a treat.

Denver Amp Works uses a Mojotone kit as the foundation of its hand-wired BF DeLuxe, but tweaks the build heavily to offer several updates and modifications to the popular 22-watt 1x12 combo format. It's a dual-6V6 powerhouse, like the original Fender Deluxe Reverb, with tube reverb and tremolo. To the usual control functions Denver Amp Works adds a pull-bright switch on the normal channel's volume control, a 'pull direct' on the vibrato channel's volume that cuts out the normal channel to add 3dB of gain, a 'pull slow' on the tremolo's speed control to cut to a more sedate pulse range, and a bypass position on the tremolo's intensity control, which yields a gain lift by taking the tremolo entirely out of circuit.

There's also a three-way negative feedback switch on the back panel, which gives you 'full' (as original, for a tight feel), 'none' for a looser feel, or 'some' for a response between the two. While the Vintage American Model 1-A might have been a good choice for the DeLuxe, the amp is in fact loaded with FluxTone's Celestion Big Blue model, a recreation of the Alnico Blue that can handle 60 watts.

Deluxe edition

Tested with a 1957 Telecaster, a 1959 Les Paul Reissue and a Heatley Parisienne with vintage P-90 pickups, the BF DeLuxe sounds as you'd expect. Cleans from Fender single coils are spanky and lively, while humbuckers and P-90s are more plummy and trenchant, and overdriven tones sing with that slightly glassy blackface edge. It sounds like a good Deluxe Reverb, but with the added bonus of several mods that have long been popular with Fender blackface fans. Add the FluxTone's VMT flexibility, though, and this particular model of speaker in particular, and the BF DeLuxe takes the format to a whole new level of versatility. Personally, I love what this British-voiced speaker does for the blackface platform, enhancing midrange texture and thickening out rockier stylings in particular. Factor in the ability to dial down the sound-pressure levels, too, and it's a lot easier to take this BFDR into lesser-used overdriven territory, and to appreciate its snarl and complexity when you get there.

The FluxTone technology is costly, and in some ways it might seem rather 'Heath Robinson', too, but it's produced by a small shop that wants to do the job right, and intends to give you a lifetime of rewarding volume reduction and tone conservation for your money. Several pros – Brad Paisley, Scott Sharrard of the Gregg Allman Band, and David Hidalgo and Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos among them – have found the investment worthwhile. If you put a premium on achieving fewer decibels while avoiding the potential artifacts of attenuators and other signal-interruption-based solutions, FluxTone is an alternative well worth checking out.

READER BOARDS

This issue, guitarist **DAVID COOPER ORTON** – or should that be David 'Looper' Orton? – talks us through his bespoke pedalboard setup

KIT LIST

David Cooper Orton

- **PEDALS**
  J Rockett Archer, Electro-Harmonix Mel9, Zoom G1Xon, Radial BigShot ABY split three ways: A) Pigtronic Infinity Looper > DigiTech Drop > mixer B) Electro-Harmonix Freeze > TC Electronic Flashback X4 set to looper > mixer C) Electro-Harmonix 22500 looper (mainly for easy access to half/double speed and reverse buttons) > Catalinbread Bicycle Delay > Neunaber Seraphim reverb, with attendant EXP switch box for additional preset access and expression pedal > mixer
- **PATCH CABLES**
  Generic patch cables; main leads – Monster Prolink, Whirlwind and Planet Waves
- **POWER SUPPLY**
  T-Rex Fuel Tank Goliath
- **BOARD TYPE**
  Gator
- **HEAR IT HERE**
  davidcooperorton-steveuccello.bandcamp.com/album/warp-and-weft

What inspired this setup?
"This version of my ever-evolving pedal array was governed by the needs of four quite different performances at the Brecon Fringe Festival. The Freeze produced a low-E drone for the quiet section of the tribute to Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way*, while the Zoom's harmonised delay interpreted the spiralling keyboard sounds of the original recording; the Mel9's faux flute setting enhanced the EBow's sustained notes throughout *In C* (both of these pieces being performed by different versions of the Gerard Cousins Project); the Drop re-pitched the looped bassline during a piece from my solo set; and the Bicycle delay and the Neunaber Seraphim produced lovely mayhem throughout, and provided soundscapes for the poet, Huw Parsons. The three loopers took care of all the composed/structured elements of my own pieces."

Tell us a little about the journey...
"I've been fascinated by tape-loop based music for a really long time, probably from the early days of Fripp and Eno, then Terry Riley, and later the pedals and rack units of Bill Frisell and David Torn. Having broken a very nice Ampex tape deck with my ham-fisted experimentation decades ago, my main looping experience began with a Lexicon JamMan in the mid 90s, and has since morphed through many boxes: Line 6 DL4 and M9; DigiTech JamMan; Eventide TimeFactor and a few others, before finally, for the last three or four years, settling on the Pigtronix Infinity, which I love for its range of parallel or loop options, reverse, vari-speed, and undo/redo features in such a compact unit."

Any pedals you are looking to add?
"I'm always on the lookout for any pedals which can enhance this setup, whether it's another looper (and for me, the flexibility of the Pigtronix Infinity takes some beating), or some form of tone-shaping device, of which the Mel9 and the Bicycle delay are the two most recent additions. There's no one pedal I'm thinking of adding just now, but I'm always open to the next thing, whatever it may be!"

What guitars and amps do you use with this board?
"My main guitar is a PRS 408 Standard, which I like for its multiple switching options, although I also have a Parker NiteFly-M which in some ways I prefer, for its slightly thinner neck and lighter body. For looping gigs, amplification is provided by an LD Systems MAUI 11 MIX Compact Column PA System. It's a bit unwieldy, but can supply a clear, broad-spectrum delivery.

What lessons have you learned?
"That there's no such thing as 'the perfect looping pedal'... yet! And each one has a mind of its own, and will definitely switch itself off at a totally random moment without any reason, so always be on your toes..."

Guitar & Bass SHOW US YOUR BOARD

To be in with a chance of seeing your pedalboard in the mag, email the details and an image to **guitarandbass@anthem-publishing.com**

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- **PRICE** £299
- **BAND** Lanterns On The Lake
- **MAIN GUITARS, AMPS & PEDALS USED** Eastwood Airline '59 Coronado, modded Epiphone Dot, Epiphone Les Paul, Vox AC30, Maxon OD9, Way Huge Green Rhino, Fredric Effects Green Russian, Fulltone 69 MkII, Z.Vex Super Hard On, DigiTech DigiVerb, DigiTech DigiDelay, Line 6 DL4
- **GIGS SO FAR** Larmer Tree Festival, Bluedot Festival, Deer Shed Festival, Beautiful Days Festival, Substage Festival, Golden Leaves Festival

TEST PILOTS EARTHQUAKER DEVICES AVALANCHE RUN

After taking the Avalanche Run on the festival circuit, **PAUL GREGORY** plugs in an expression pedal as his band prepare for their UK tour...

In my first test report, I'd known the Avalanche Run for only a week before I used it live. It's now been two months, and I've had time to really get to know it better. In that time, Lanterns On The Lake played another UK festival and then headed off to Germany to play the Substage and Golden Leaves festivals, as well as starting rehearsals for our UK tour in November.

I had been powering the pedal using a Diago Powerstation, with no daisy chain attached, just straight in, so it had its own supply. All my other pedals are powered via a Voodoo Lab Pedal Power 2 Plus. As I'd already decided the Avalanche Run would become a permanent fixture on my pedalboard, I thought it might be time to remove the Diago and power it via the Voodoo Lab to clean things up a bit. I tend to assume the Voodoo Lab will power anything on Earth, and my general philosophy for powering pedals is, if you plug it in, the light comes on and it makes a noise, all is good and off we go. Hooking it up to the Voodoo Lab certainly got the Avalanche Run working. However, the tap tempo began to act strangely. I'd tap in the time and nothing would happen, or it would come up with a different time.

A quick email to EarthQuaker Devices and it turned out that the Voodoo Lab slightly under-powers the pedal, causing the issue – the Avalanche Run requires around 425mA. After a quick slap on the wrist for not reading the manual properly, I hooked it back up to the Diago Powerstation (which supplies up to 3000mA). Problem solved.

I also finally got hold of an expression pedal – a Moog Moogerfooger EP3 – to test out some of the things I couldn't last time. The two settings I was interested in for live use were the delay mix and the delay feedback, the former acting as an on/off function for the delay so I could use the reverb independently, the latter for maxing out the feedback to create sound-on-sound style looping.

Using the expression pedal for both functions works flawlessly. The feedback function is amazing for pseudo looping – you can get some really epic pieces as the delays cascade into the feedback, creating a whole host of ambient noise, and in a live setting it's very easy to control.

However, the expression function I've become fascinated with is controlling the delay time, especially using the swell and reverse functions. On the Avalanche Run, controlling the delay time with the expression pedal is not the same as turning the time knob manually, nor is it the same as other delays I've experienced. It does the glitchy thing, but it has a great depth to it, allowing you to create all sorts of warped guitar sounds – very distinct and still musical.

Slight movements on the expression pedal bend the notes up or down, and it sounds as if they're being stretched and ripped apart. Combined with layers of fuzz, you can get some fascinating tones using this. This pedal has so many possibilities hiding in it and each one I've found has been very usable. I've loved my time with it – it's going nowhere!

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SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE

Aynsley Lister

British bluesman reveals some choice cuts from his record collection

Aynsley Lister is one of the leading lights of modern-day British blues guitar. Growing up around music by his heroes Green, King, Kossoff and Clapton, he was releasing his own records by the age of 18. He now has 10 studio albums under his belt and has toured with Lynyrd Skynyrd, Walter Trout and John Mayall. *Aynsley Lister's album Eyes Wide Open is out now. He is on tour in the UK until 18 December. See www.aynsleylister.co.uk for information.*

Rival Sons
GREAT WESTERN VALKYRIE

"I discovered these guys at Download this year, but have to say I was hooked from the first song they played. They're like the perfect mix of Free and Led Zeppelin – huge guitar riffs, massive Bonham-esque drums and a singer with one hell of a voice. They've really got that formula nailed and the sound on their albums is proper."

Michael Jackson
THRILLER

"A timeless record that definitely appeals to the songwriter side of me! The songs are full of hooks, great lyrics and great music with some stellar musicianship, too! There's just so much content, almost like a film – it kind of takes you on a journey. The groove on *Billie Jean* and Eddie Van Halen's solo on *Beat It* are killer."

Stevie Ray Vaughan
IN THE BEGINNING

"This was a 25-year-old unsigned, unknown SRV. It was two years before he played Montreux, where he got his big break. Listening to this just goes to show that he had it together from the start, and his playing is incredible. He had a way of being able to floor it, but with so much finesse and control. Hugely inspirational to the teenager I was when I first heard this."

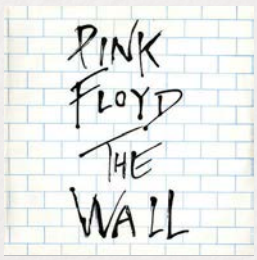
Bryan Adams
RECKLESS

"In my opinion, this album features some of Bryan's best-ever songs. They still hold up today, and I still love 'em. They're all guitar-driven, but they're great songs on their own, so maybe it's that formula that appeals to me. The guitars are always really melodic and the parts are just wicked. My favourite track has got to be *Run To You* because it has everything."

Eric Clapton
BEHIND THE SUN

"This is the period when Eric Clapton produced some of his best ever guitar playing. *Behind The Sun* is an album with some really great songs on it, and while the production is a little bit 1980s sounding, it's the tone of Clapton's guitar and what he plays on it that puts this record right up there among the best albums I've ever heard for me."

Pink Floyd
THE WALL



"This album kind of reminds me of my childhood – even back then, I always remember it sounded different to the other records my dad would play. This is the work of a vivid mind, and whenever I listen to it now I realise it's a real masterpiece of an album. I love the tone of David Gilmour's guitar and his minimalist yet melodic playing, too."

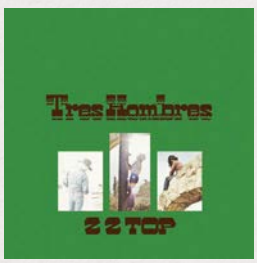
The Jimi Hendrix Experience
ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

"Another one that takes me back. I remember first watching the Live At Monterey concert and being blown away, then scouring my dad's records to find this. For a studio record, it still hits the mark for me, and shows what a genius the guy was to be able to adapt what he did on stage to the recording studio and strike the right balance."

AC/DC
IF YOU WANT BLOOD YOU'VE GOT IT

"This album made me want to go straight out and buy a Marshall amp and turn it up really loud as soon as I first heard it! It's balls-out from the off, and it has more swagger than you can shake a stick at! How on earth Angus Young manages to play this well whilst he's running around in circles is just beyond me. It's three-chord genius."

ZZ Top
TRES HOMBRES



"This album has the the guitar tone from heaven all over it. Is it because of his 1959 Les Paul? Is it due to the amp he uses? Nope... it's just Billy Gibbons doing what he does! The guy could just play the same thing round and round for a whole solo and it would still sound absolutely awesome. Billy Gibbons is a true master of guitar noises!"

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DEUTSCH CONNECTION

The weekend of 8-9 October 2016 saw some of the world's leading luthiers assemble at the Estrel Hotel in Berlin for the third Holy Grail Guitar Show. A relaxed and informal affair with a real sense of community, the show was an opportunity to meet some of the most talented and innovative builders on the planet and see a wondrous array of creations, from futuristic, extended-range axes to swampy relics. Here are some of our favourites...

5

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1 & 2 French luthier Loïc Le Pape's steel-bodied 1946 Engraved 'Scratched' Silver *loiclepapesteelguitars.com* 3 & 4 Oliver Baron of Helliver Guitars with the Trapezoid hollowbody built for Billy Gibbons *helliver.de* 5, 6 & 7 Several of Brit builder Alister Atkin's instruments were stuck in transit thanks to a courier error, but this gorgeous tribute to Buddy Holly's 1943 banner headstock J-45 was more than enough to set pulses racing *atkinguitars.com* 8 Impressive metalwork from iVee Guitars of Indonesia *facebook.com/iVeeGuitars* 9 The Reverse: a very cool twist on the Firebird theme from Volt Electrics *voltguitars.com*

10 & 13 Swedish luthier Peter Naglitsch and a pair of his beautiful hollowbody electrics *peternaglitschluthier.com* 11 & 12 More metal-bodied wonders from France, this time courtesy of Meloduende *meloduende.fr* 14 One of Portugal-based Brit luthier Seth Baccus' many glorious singlecut electrics *sethbaccus.com* 15 Organic futurism from Sankey Guitars *sankeyguitars.com* 16 & 18 Steinbrecher Guitars' Stromer model with its innovative ashtray vibrato *steinbrecher.neugestaltung.com* 17 A sleek design from Italy courtesy of Di Donato Guitars with modular external electronics *didonatoguitars.it* 19 Another beautiful archtop from David Jünger *juenger-gitarren.de*

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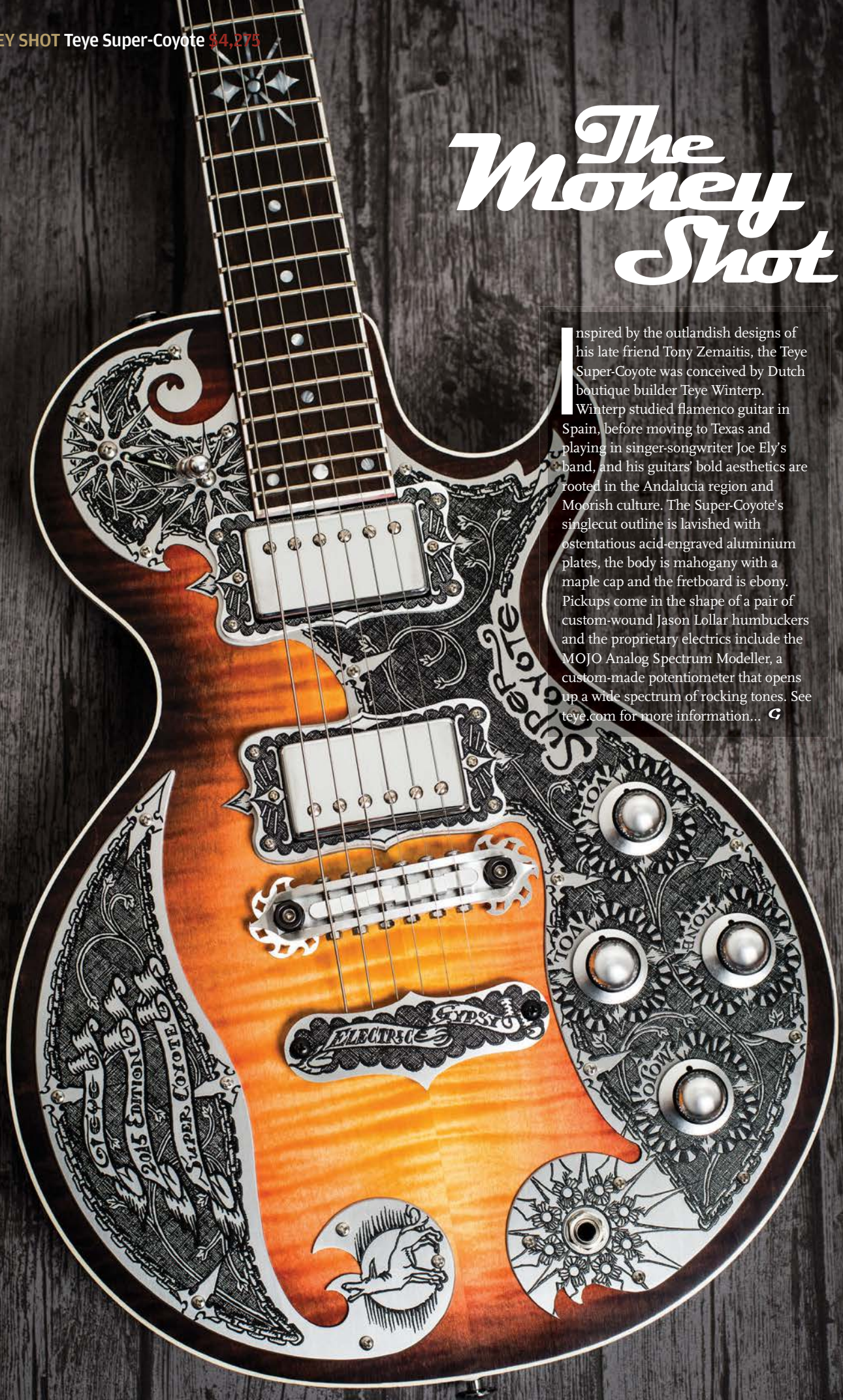
The Money Shot



Inspired by the outlandish designs of his late friend Tony Zemaitis, the Teye Super-Coyote was conceived by Dutch boutique builder Teye Winterp. Winterp studied flamenco guitar in Spain, before moving to Texas and playing in singer-songwriter Joe Ely's band, and his guitars' bold aesthetics are rooted in the Andalucia region and Moorish culture. The Super-Coyote's singlecut outline is lavished with ostentatious acid-engraved aluminium plates, the body is mahogany with a maple cap and the fretboard is ebony. Pickups come in the shape of a pair of custom-wound Jason Lollar humbuckers and the proprietary electrics include the MOJO Analog Spectrum Modeller, a custom-made potentiometer that opens up a wide spectrum of rocking tones. See teye.com for more information... G

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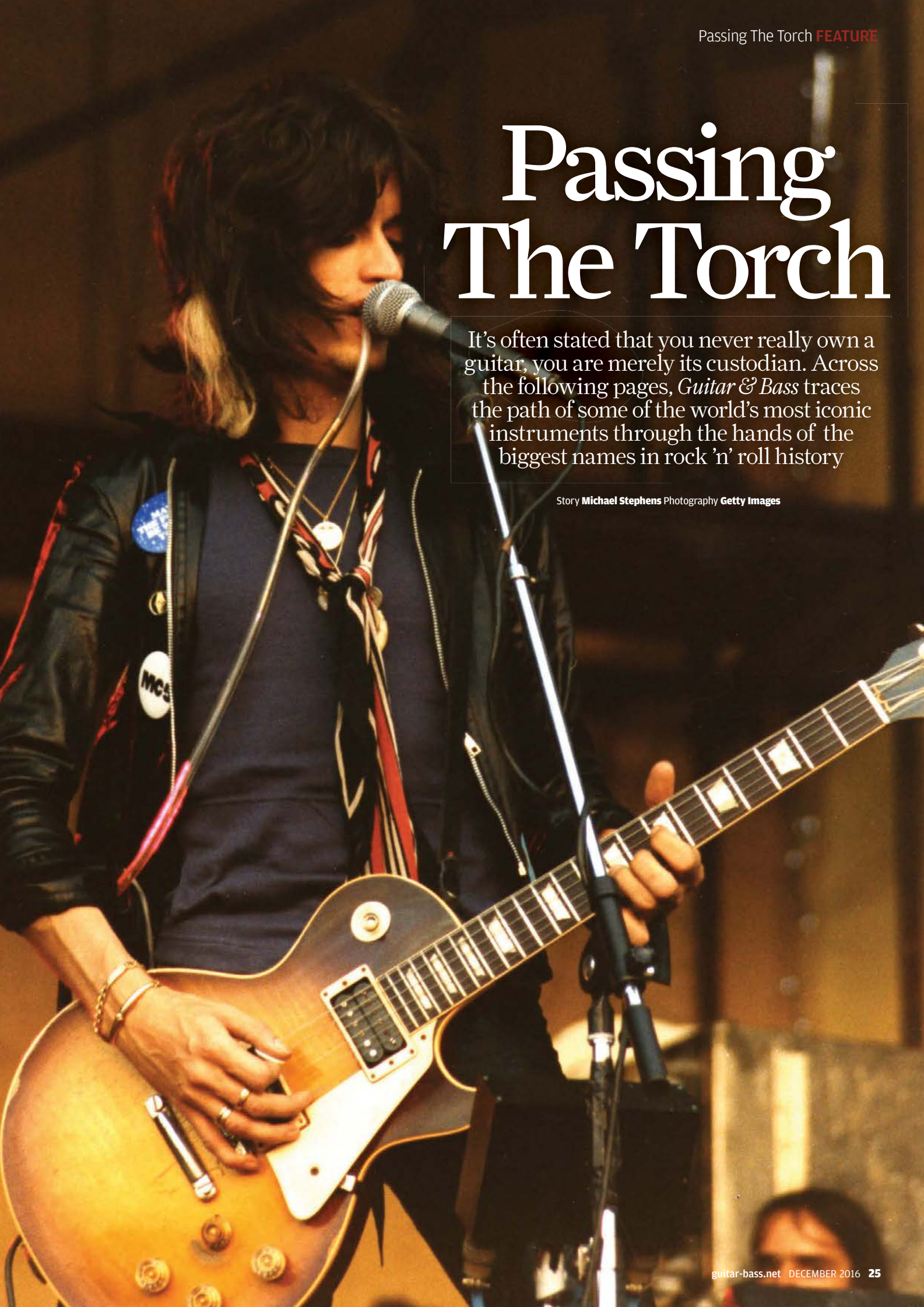


Passing The Torch

It's often stated that you never really own a guitar, you are merely its custodian. Across the following pages, *Guitar & Bass* traces the path of some of the world's most iconic instruments through the hands of the biggest names in rock 'n' roll history

Story **Michael Stephens** Photography **Getty Images**

My elder brother once passed on to me a lovely 1970s Tobacco Burst Yamaha FG acoustic. I learned to play on that guitar. I later, foolishly, loaned it to a friend and never asked for it back when I moved cities. When I met the late, great Bert Jansch, he had one that was near-identical. How annoying that I gave away a great guitar... my brother probably thinks the same.

But that's pretty much the limit of my guitar story, as I am not famous, an insatiable guitar collector... nor being stalked permanently by Joe Walsh.

The following guitars and players are thus in a different league. They've seen their instruments traded, gifted, bought, sold, stolen... resulting in some of the most fabled six-string myths and legends we've come to know and love. You can smell the wood rising from these pages.

Note: you will never own these guitars. Especially if these tales are all true. But here are (reportedly) the inside stories on how some of guitarland's most famous DNA has been passed around...

RUDOLF SCHENKER TO MICHAEL SCHENKER

'71 Gibson Flying V Medallion

THE STORY Rudolf (now aged 68) and Michael Schenker (61) have had many differences over the years, but they've always been brothers – in both metal and Flying Vs. Younger prodigy Michael was guesting with Rudolf's Scorpions aged just 11, but he always wanted to be his own man. In his teens, Michael formed his own band, and needed a regular guitar quick. So he simply 'borrowed' Rudolf's V – a birthday present – and made it his signature.

"I never picked the Flying V because of its look," says Michael. "I ended up with it because Rudolf was playing it... I heard the sound, combined with my amplifier, and I just understood that I had a great sound there." Originally all-white, the look of the Schenker brothers' '71 Medallion is the reason James Hetfield played white Vs early-on in Metallica.

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND Refinished in black and white, Michael's 'borrowed' V became a metal icon. Even Rudolf had a number of his later Vs similarly refinished. But hard times in the 2000s saw Michael sell the original Gibson, and he now plays Dean versions. So, Rudolf is now the brother with an 'original' black/white re-fin Gibson V. Without any apparent sarcasm, Michael claimed in 2016 that Rudolf "steals everything that I have done."

JOE WALSH TO JIMMY PAGE

'59 Gibson Les Paul (aka #1)

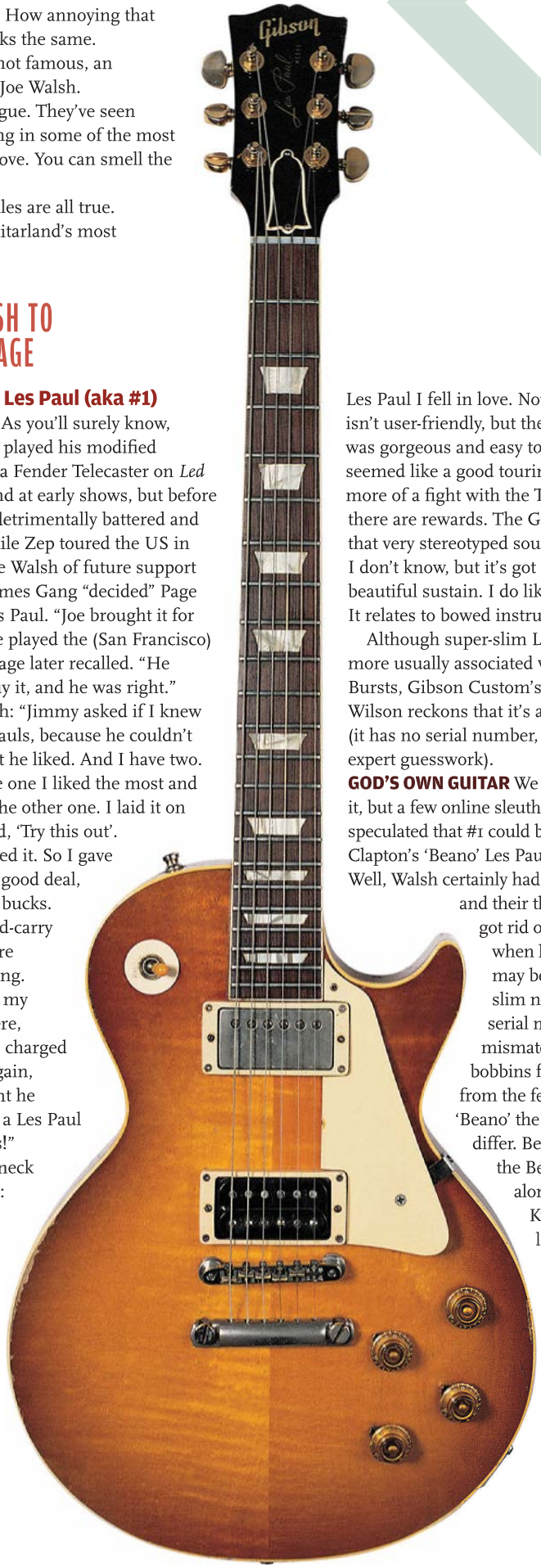
THE STORY As you'll surely know, Jimmy Page played his modified Yardbirds-era Fender Telecaster on *Led Zeppelin I* and at early shows, but before long it was detrimentally battered and bruised. While Zep toured the US in 1968-69, Joe Walsh of future support band The James Gang "decided" Page needed a Les Paul. "Joe brought it for me when we played the (San Francisco) Fillmore," Page later recalled. "He insisted I buy it, and he was right."

Said Walsh: "Jimmy asked if I knew of any Les Pauls, because he couldn't find one that he liked. And I have two. So I kept the one I liked the most and I flew with the other one. I laid it on him and said, 'Try this out'. He really liked it. So I gave him a really good deal, about 1,200 bucks. I had to hand-carry it; I flew there and everything. So whatever my expenses were, that's what I charged him... but again, I just thought he should have a Les Paul for godsakes!"

The slim neck wowed Page: "As soon as I played the Les Paul I fell in love. Not that the Tele isn't user-friendly, but the Les Paul was gorgeous and easy to play. It just seemed like a good touring guitar... it's more of a fight with the Telecaster, but there are rewards. The Gibson's got all that very stereotyped sound, maybe, I don't know, but it's got a really beautiful sustain. I do like sustain. It relates to bowed instruments."

Although super-slim LP necks are more usually associated with 1960 Bursts, Gibson Custom's Edwin Wilson reckons that it's a late '59 (it has no serial number, so this is expert guesswork).

GOD'S OWN GUITAR We don't buy it, but a few online sleuths have speculated that #1 could be Eric Clapton's 'Beano' Les Paul. What? Well, Walsh certainly had many guitars and their theory is he got rid of this one when he realised it may be stolen. The slim neck, missing serial number and mismatched pickup bobbins fit the bill, but from the few photos of 'Beano' the top appears to differ. Best, then, to file the Beano/#1 theory alongside 'Stanley Kubrick moon landings'.



RICHARD THOMPSON/PAUL KOSSOFF/JOE WALSH TO JOHN MARTYN

1950s Gibson Les Paul Goldtops

THE STORY The late John Martyn was associated with Les Paul Goldtops often throughout his mercurial career – oddly, all three were given to him by more famous admirers. The first was Richard Thompson, who gave Martyn the Goldtop he played in Fairport Convention, which he believed to be a '55: "It was stolen within a week," Thompson later revealed. No matter! Martyn was then donated further '54 P-90 Goldtops by Joe Walsh (him again!) and Paul Kossoff, when the latter favoured Fender Strats.

SWEET LITTLE MYSTERY Martyn once claimed one of the '54s was "from Eric Clapton" – this could be true. Even if it didn't go direct to Martyn, it's known that Clapton and Kossoff traded at least once (Koss's 1957 three-pickup Les Paul Custom going to Clapton in exchange for Eric's '58 Gibson Les Paul 'darkburst'). That said, there is no record of Clapton giving Kossoff a Goldtop, nor Clapton giving any guitar direct to Martyn.

ERIC CARMEN TO JOAN JETT

60s Gibson Melody Maker

THE STORY In The Runaways, Jett often toted a trad singlecut Les Paul but, at just 5'2", always found it heavy. Her roadie/tech just happened to be one Kevin Dugan, who had previously worked with Eric Carmen in power-pop outfit The Raspberries. Unknown to Joan, Dugan bought a guitar from Carmen for her. Nice. Befitting a 'low end' model, Jett's "baby" – hers from '77 – remained no pristine original, with rare Red Rhodes Velvet Hammer-brand aftermarket humbucker and added killswitch. Gibson made a Joan Jett signature Melody Maker in 2009.

JIMI HENDRIX TO BILLY F GIBBONS

Pink '57 Fender Stratocaster

THE STORY It's early 1968, and the Jimi Hendrix Experience are touring the US. One of the support bands are a fledgling pysch-rock outfit called The Moving Sidewalks, with a 19-year-old called Billy F Gibbons on lead guitar. This much is undeniably true. At a hotel along the way, Jimi presents the future ZZ Top man with a rare pink Strat, reportedly a '57.

"This is the first five-way toggle switch that I ever saw," BFG later told *Guitar World*. "He took the springs off the standard switch so that it just hung there. When he wanted to move it out of phase, Jimi'd shake the guitar until the switch moved, smooth as can be, into the position."

Gibbons said that, over the years, the original pink "degenerated to more of an apricot". But why did Jimi pass it on? Gibbons: "He said the colour pink was not conducive to burning. So he gave it to me and said, 'Play on, Brother'."

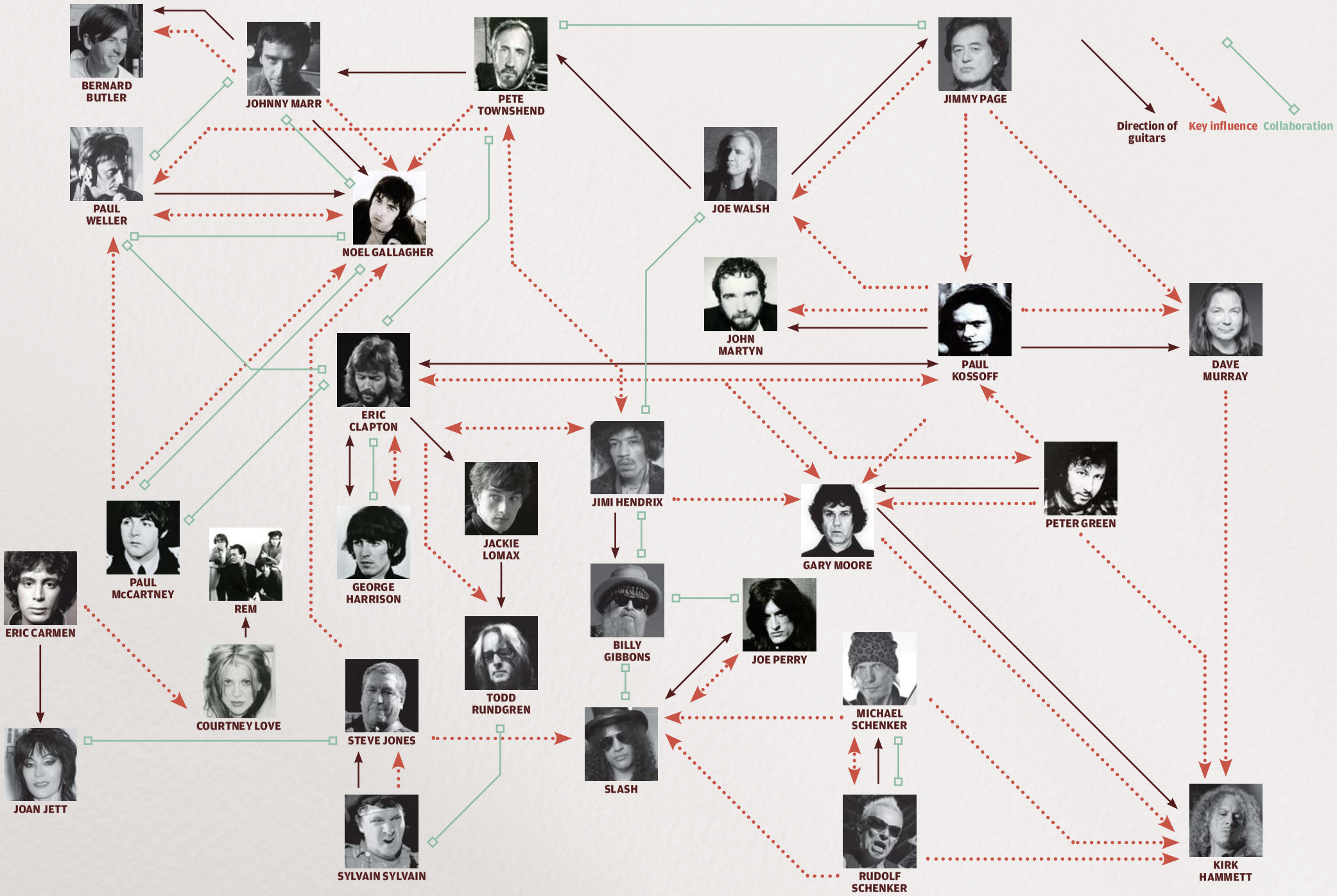
TOP MYTH Many say that Jimi praised BFG as "the next player to look out for" or "America's greatest young guitarist" on *The Tonight Show* and/or *The Dick Cavett Show*, but these stories emerged way before these shows' archive footage was reissued. Of what has been reissued, Jimi is not seen mentioning Billy. The Jimi Strat is not featured in BFG's book, *Rock + Roll Gearhead* (yet it does find space for 'Rev Willy's Killadilla Renegade Guacamole' recipe).

BFG is a primo storyteller – anyone who knows his yarn about his Pearly Gates Les Paul knows this – so, as a whole, the riffing yarn is some percentage fact! Only Billy knows.

Jimi Hendrix with The Moving Sidewalks in February 1968. Billy Gibbons is second from the right

HEIR GUITAR

A quick and select guide to who supplied who in the famous guitar club. And, yes, it's way more complicated than this in reality!



PETE TOWNSHEND TO JOHNNY MARR TO NOEL GALLAGHER

1960(?) Les Paul Standard
Later, a black '72 Les Paul Custom

WHAT'S THE STORY? Marr was a mentor to the fledgling Oasis, but early on he was frustrated by young Noel Gallagher "spending ages" tuning up live between songs on the only electric he owned. Johnny suggested Noel buy a second guitar. "That's alright for you to say," retorted Gallagher, according to Marr. "I've got 12 quid, I'm on the dole, I'm skint! You've got a hundred guitars."

Chastened, Johnny generously offered to "loan" Noel a second guitar "until he got a bit of money". But, deciding it couldn't be anything too cheap, Marr reached for a "worth a fortune" 1960 sunburst Les Paul he'd bought from Pete Townshend, though some have speculated that the guitar was a late-60s conversion rather than a real Burst. Either way, Marr thought it would "buzz Noel up".

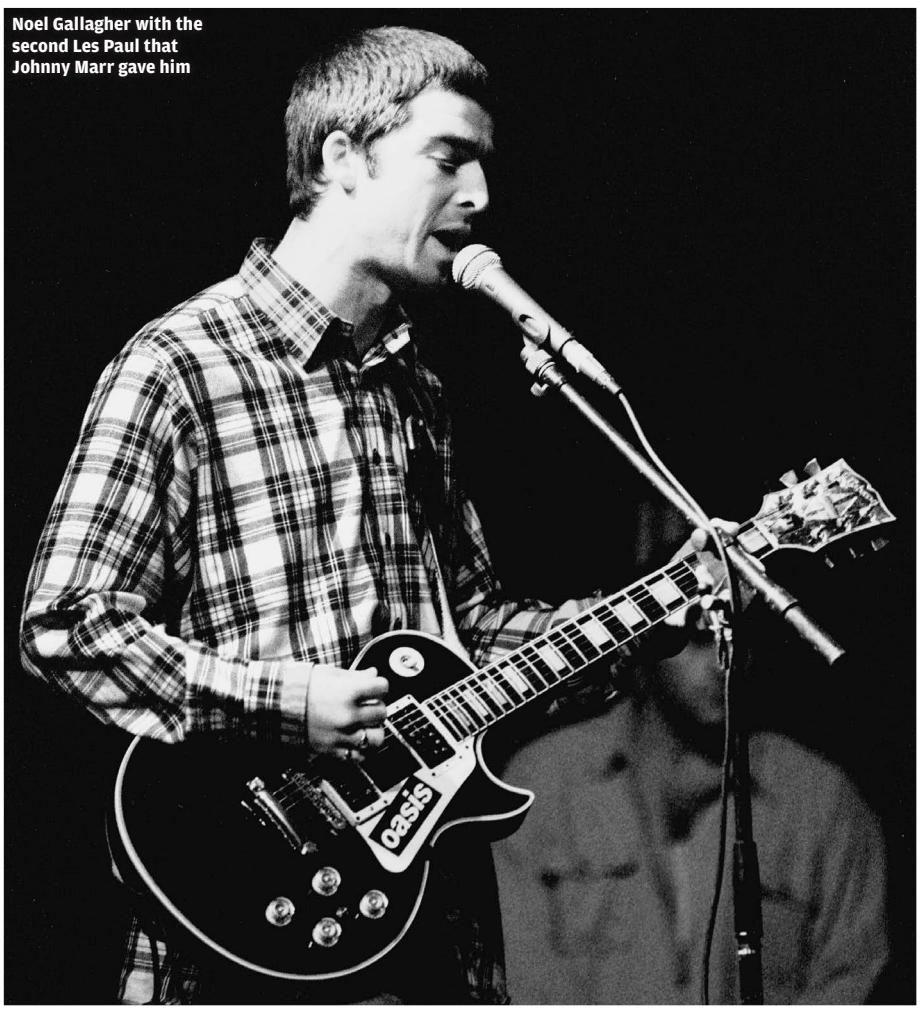
Gallagher was smitten, and it quickly became his main guitar; he says he immediately penned *Live Forever* and *Slide Away* on it: "I swear that song [*Slide Away*] wrote itself." The Townshend/Marr/Gallagher LP can be seen in the *Live Forever* video.

Oasis-style, uproar predictably struck. At a gig in Newcastle in August '94, Noel swung the Lester at a stage invader and smashed it. Oasis's management, also Marr's, phoned the ex-Smith and told him. "Oh, that's terrible! What do you want me to do about it?" Marr remembered saying. Management: "Erm... can you lend him another one?"

Generous to a fault, Marr then sent his black 1972 Les Paul Custom for Oasis's next gig. Marr had played it extensively on The Smiths' album *The Queen Is Dead*. Marr included a note: "This one's well heavy. Get a good swing on it, and you'll take the fucker out!" With an Oasis sticker added to the pickguard, the black Custom was often seen at mid-90s Oasis gigs.

RETURN TO SENDER When preparing to record a guest solo on Oasis' *Heathen Chemistry* album, Marr was handed a guitar by Oasis tech Jason Rhodes... himself Marr's ex-tech. It was that black Custom, still in one piece. So the story, says Marr, "Had a nice resolve to it".

DON'T BELIEVE THE TRUTH Back to the Townshend/Marr/Gallagher 'Burst'. In the 2011 book *Riverside: Newcastle's Legendary Alternative Music Venue*, security man Mal Wallace insists that Gallagher never did hit his assailant. As he prepared to take a swing, Noel Gallagher broke the Les Paul... by accidentally smashing it into his own face.



Noel Gallagher with the second Les Paul that Johnny Marr gave him

JOE PERRY TO ERIC JOHNSON TO SLASH... TO JOE PERRY

'59 Gibson Les Paul Tobacco Burst

THE STORY Aerosmith's Joe Perry estimates he owns around 650 guitars, but this favourite sure has been 'walkabout'. After their divorce in 1982, Perry's ex-wife sold his vintage Gibson (serial #9 0663, pictured on p25) to a store for circa $4,500. The store sold it to noted jazz player Gerry Beaudoin, who sold it to Eric Johnson. It was only later that EJ found it had been Perry's, so he offered it back for what he paid. Perry, though – still smarting from financial and substance woes – couldn't afford it. Johnson decided on the next-best recipient – he sold it to Slash. Yet Perry still hankered for it. And Slash wasn't keeping it under wraps. "I was talking to Brad [Whitford] about it," says Perry, "and the next day he walks into the studio and says, 'I know where your guitar is'.

"He shows me an issue of *Guitar Player*, and there's a story on Slash's guitars, and right in the middle was a picture of the guitar." Perry tried to buy it back, but at first Slash wasn't relenting... even to his hero. "Oh man, please don't ask me that," Slash reportedly said. After all, it was one of Slash's favourite guitars, too. It's all over Guns N' Roses' *Use Your Illusion* albums and in the famous *November Rain* video.

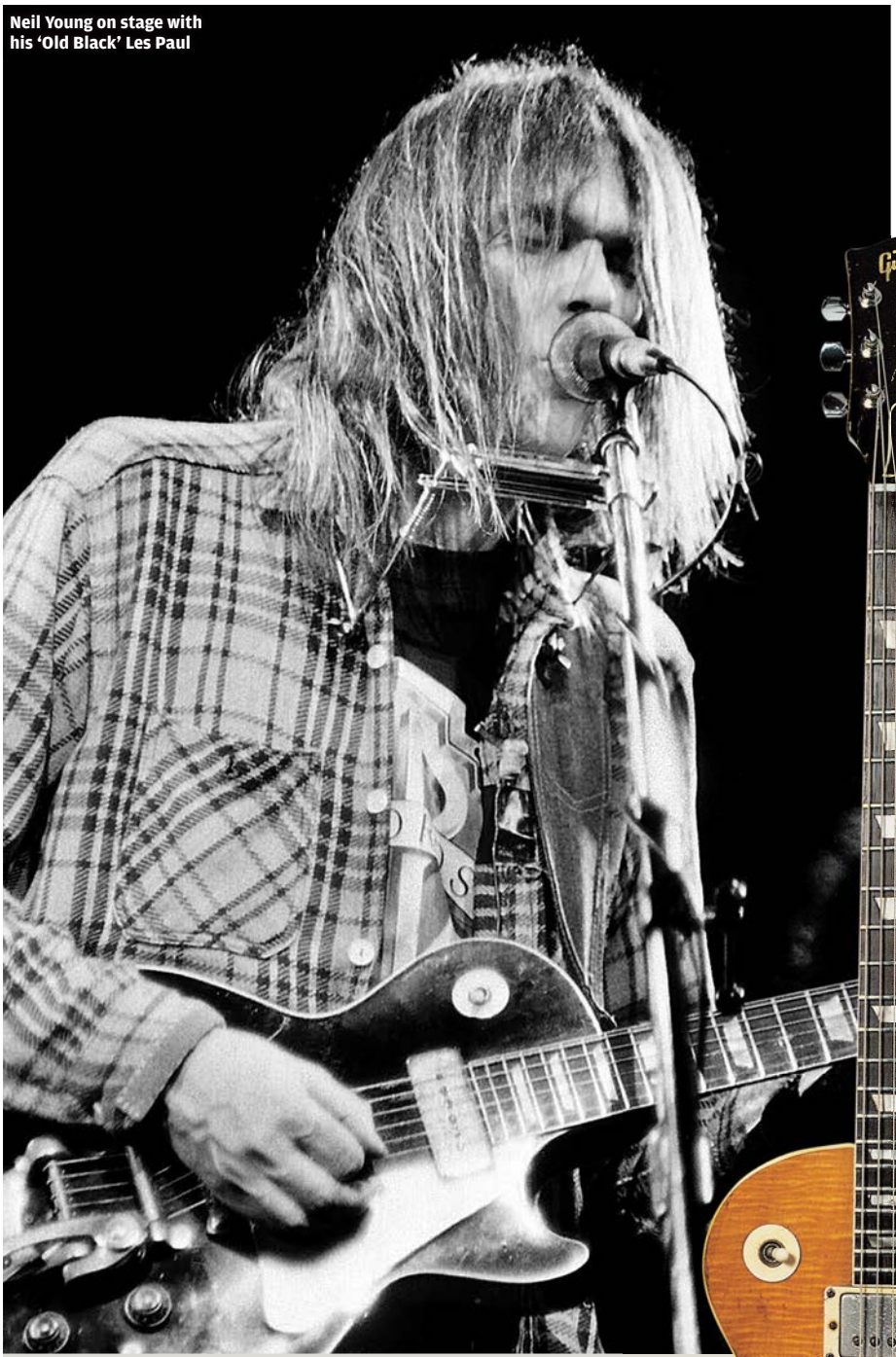
WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND "I kept the guitar for a long time," Slash later recalled, "but I knew Joe loved it probably as much as I did." As Perry was about to take the stage with Cheap Trick at his 50th birthday party in 2000, he was handed a familiar-looking Les Paul and the message: "Slash says, 'Happy Birthday'."

KURT COBAIN/COURTNEY LOVE TO PETER BUCK

Fender prototype Jag-Stang

THE STORY Although famously dismissive of expensive guitars, Kurt Cobain did help design his own Fender Jaguar/Mustang hybrid, the Jag-Stang. He played the Sonic Blue production prototype (only occasionally) on the European leg of Nirvana's final *In Utero* tour in 1994. After Cobain's death in April '94, widow Courtney Love gave it to REM's Michael Stipe, who can be seen with it, restrung right-handed, in the video for *What's The Frequency Kenneth?* It was also played by Mike Mills on *Let Me In*, Stipe's eulogy for Cobain on REM's September '94 *Monster* album. More handed-on trivia? In the *'Kenneth?* video, the 'nudie suit' worn by Mills was tailored for Gram Parsons.

UNPLAYED Fender's Fiesta Red prototype Jag-Stang was never received by Cobain. It was still at the Fender factory when he died.



Neil Young on stage with his 'Old Black' Les Paul

JIM MESSINA TO NEIL YOUNG

'Old Black' Les Paul

THE STORY Old Black seems very much a guitar unique to Young, with its battered body, Bigsby, Firebird mini-humbucker and ultra-worn frets that 'Shakey' refuses to have changed. "Old Black doesn't sound like any other guitar," admits Young's long-suffering tech Larry Cragg. Prior to Young, it was owned by Buffalo Springfield bassist/vocalist/producer Jim Messina – Young swapped his orange Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins with Messina in '68 during the recording of the *Last Time Around* album. And, originally, it was a '52 or '53 Goldtop. Messina, later of Poco, has asked to buy it back, but Young has always declined, telling his former band colleague: "A trade is a trade".

YOUNG AND OLD Old Black remains a high-maintenance ol' dawg. Cragg jokes: "At soundcheck, everything will work great. Neil picks up the guitar... and that's when things go wrong."

PETER GREEN TO GARY MOORE TO KIRK HAMMETT

'59 Les Paul

THE STORY This Les Paul is known as The Holy Grail for its sweetly hollow 'out of phase' tones that, to many listeners, make it sound more akin to a Fender Stratocaster. The mechanics of the 'Grail' have been debated for many years: out-of-phase pickups after Green reassembled it wrong, factory error in a reverse-fitted magnet (the most likely explanation), even unusually large pickup routings – but its allure is down not only to its sound, but its owners and players, too.

Fleetwood Mac's Peter Green bought it second-hand in the mid-60s for circa £110: he wanted a Les Paul, as he'd been asked to replace Eric Clapton in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers.

In Fleetwood Mac, Green made it sound absolutely sublime – think *Black Magic Woman*, *Oh Well* and *Man Of The World* – but after his 'retirement' from music, Green sold it to acolyte and friend Gary Moore in the early 70s (note, Green had first offered it to Snowy White, but White couldn't afford to buy both Green's '59 and his '57 Les Paul Goldtop – he bought the latter).

Moore said he paid only what Green had originally bought it for, and there was a gentleman's agreement that Peter could buy the guitar back again for that price at any time. Green never asked. And Moore later put an end to any potential return to Green when he sold it in the mid-2000s to a US dealer, Maverick Music, that originally offered it for a price of $2m.

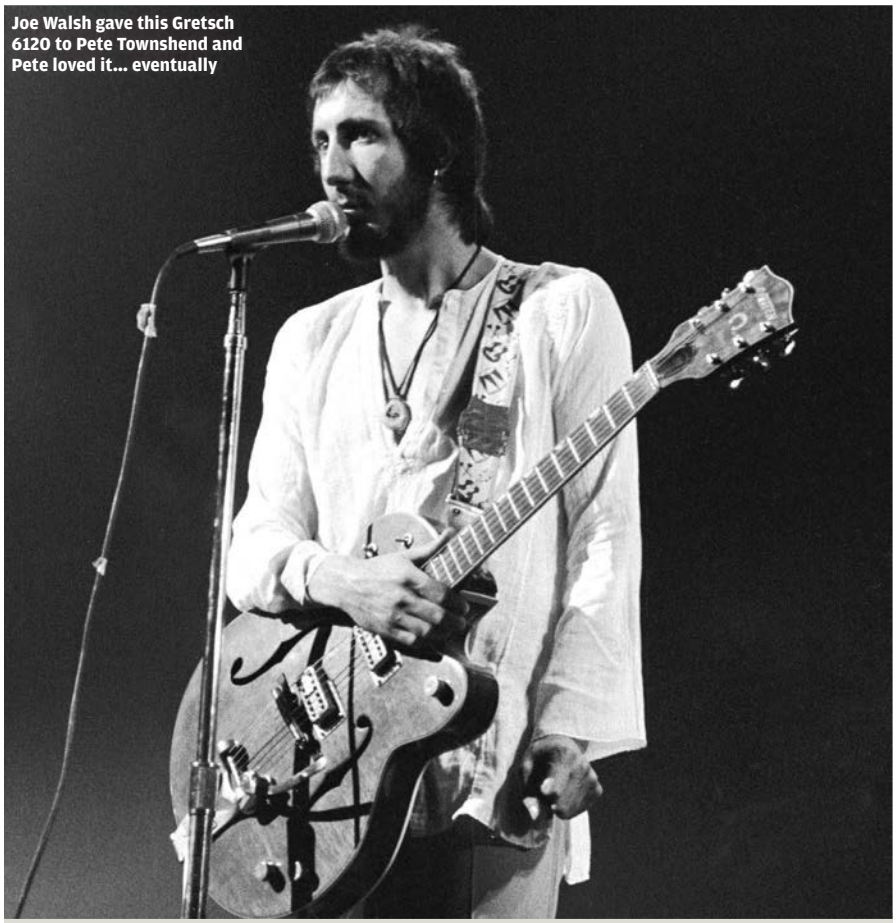
GREEN TO BLACK After a few years in the hands of private collectors, Greeny was bought by Metallica's Kirk Hammett, and features on the new Metallica album, *Hardwired... To Self Destruct*. Will it sound like Peter Green? Doubtful. It'll sound like Kirk Hammett.

PAUL KOSSOFF TO DAVE MURRAY

1957 Fender Stratocaster

THE STORY Paul Kossoff was a devoted Jimi Hendrix fan – they'd met when a young teen Koss was working in the Selmer Music store in central London – and, on Jimi's death, Kossoff switched from Les Pauls to play Strats in "tribute". By turn, a young Dave Murray was a huge fan of Free and bought one of Koss's Strats via a *Melody Maker* advert in '76, just after Koss's own untimely death. Murray recalled: "I had a Les Paul at the time and I sold that, borrowed some money, and went for that Strat specifically because of the history behind it. I got the serial numbers to make sure that it was his guitar. It just felt like I was holding a piece of magic." It went on to be Murray's main guitar with Iron Maiden up to 1991, although he retired some years ago and now keeps it "at my mum's".

BRAVE NEW WORLD? Murray certainly didn't retain the guitar as any 'authentic' Paul Kossoff artefact. It had already been repainted black, and Murray had the body re-routed for a pair of DiMarzio humbuckers. Fair enough – it's pobably more famous now as the 'Dave Murray Strat' than the white '57 he saw Kossoff playing on *My Brother Jake* for Free's 1971 *Top Of The Pops* performance.



Joe Walsh gave this Gretsch 6120 to Pete Townshend and Pete loved it... eventually

JOE WALSH TO PETE TOWNSHEND

'59 Gretsch 6120

THE STORY By 1970, Joe Walsh's James Gang were supporting stadium acts, including The Who for *Tommy*. Walsh says he decided that Townshend needed a new sound (how generous!) and accordingly gave him his vintage orange 6120 Chet Atkins, a bedrock for much of *Who's Next* and *Quadrophenia*.

In '72, Townshend told *Guitar Player*: "I never really got into old guitars until Joe Walsh rang me up one night and said: 'I've got something for you', because we buy one another presents... Anyway, I opened the case and it was bright orange and I thought, 'Ugh! It's horrible, I hate it'. I went home and went into my studio and plugged it in and it totally wrecked me out. It's the best guitar I've got now. It won't stay in tune on stage, but if it did I would use it. It's the finest guitar I've ever owned, it's the loudest guitar I've ever owned."

WON'T GET BRUISED AGAIN Townshend smashed it on *Top Of The Pops* (Oct 1973) – as seen in the outro credits of *The Kids Are Alright* – reportedly due to the BBC insisting The Who shorten *5.15*. Repaired, it remains in Townshend's arsenal.

JOHN SEBASTIAN TO RICK DERRINGER TO ERIC CLAPTON TO GEORGE HARRISON

'57 red 'Lucy' Les Paul

THE STORY Originally a '57 Goldtop, Lucy was first owned by The Lovin' Spoonful's John Sebastian, who had a Bigsby fitted. Around 1966, it was bought by Rick Derringer when in The McCoys, who decided it needed a refin. "I loved playing it," recalled Derringer, "but my dad – who always loved a guitar looking real good – used to comment on how it was kind of beat up. It was a very, very used guitar. But it played great. So I figured that since we didn't live so far from Gibson's factory in Kalamazoo, the next time the group went there I'd give it to Gibson and have it refinished."

Derringer opted for an SG red and had the Bigsby removed by Gibson, but the refin changed the feel and sound and Derringer traded it for a Sunburst Les Paul at Dan Armstrong's guitar shop in Manhattan in '68. Enter Eric Clapton just a few weeks later, who bought it: he'd never seen a Cherry Red Les Paul before.

But "I already had a Les Paul," remembered Clapton, who had bought it mainly as a backup, so he soon gave it to George Harrison. The Beatle nicknamed it Lucy, after redhead comedienne Lucille Ball. According to Mal Evans' (Beatles roadie) monthly column for *The Beatles Monthly Book*, Harrison first played it on *Not Guilty* in August '68 – though the track was dropped last minute from the 'White Album'. But when Harrison picked up Clapton by car to guest on another track, Eric didn't have a guitar with him. At Abbey Road, Harrison handed Lucy back for Clapton to play lead on *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*.

ERIC CLAPTON (TO GEORGE HARRISON) TO JACKIE LOMAX TO TODD RUNDGREN

Custom-painted 'Fool' 1964 Gibson SG

THE STORY A tale as strange as the guitar looks. This SG was possibly originally owned by George Harrison: in the 60s, he and Clapton swapped guitars like, erm, women. But when with EC, this red SG was primed white, then custom painted by Dutch Art collective The Fool (who also worked for The Beatles), and it was the guitar noted for Clapton's fabled 'woman' tone.

Post-Cream, Eric gave it (back?) to Harrison, who immediately gave it to Apple's Jackie Lomax, who later sold it to Todd Rundgren, who'd been "mesmerised" by seeing Clapton play it with Cream at their NYC debut in 1967. Rundgren named it Sunny – perhaps as a tribute to *Sunshine Of Your Love* – and had replicas made. He eventually retired the original from live use, and it was auctioned on and on... Rundgren needed the money for an IRS bill (insert your own Taxman joke). The Fool's last reported sale was for $500,000, and it's currently on loan in San Francisco's Hard Rock Café collection.

FOOLISH TODD Rundgren may have sold too early... he got 'only' £150k for The Fool. Then again, he'd paid only $500. "It was a mess!" he has since said. The Fool may have been artists, but it seems they didn't know how to refinish guitars.

SYLVAIN SYLVAIN TO MALCOLM MCCLAREN TO STEVE JONES

White '74 Les Paul Custom

THE STORY Prior to managing The Sex Pistols, Malcolm McClaren was 'personal manager' of the equally volatile New York Dolls. According to guitarist Sylvain, McClaren told the Doll that, in exchange for his pin-up girl-stickered LP, "he would mail me back a plane ticket and build a new band around me in England." Sylvain never went, but the guitar did. Soon after, it was in the hands of Steve Jones and his main live guitar. "That became [Steve's] thing, the guitar with the pin-up girl – which was really my thing," Sylvain says. Jones sold the Sylvain guitar in 1985 with a letter of authenticity.

EVER GET THE FEELING YOU'VE BEEN CHEATED? As always with Jones, there have been numerous truths and untruths about his gear. The Fender Twin Reverb used to record *Never Mind The Bollocks* was reportedly stolen from a Bob Marley gig by Jones himself; Jones admits he has had quite a few similar Customs and oft claims they're all the one. Jones even said in one interview, while cradling his 'original' Custom: "I have to be very quiet about this guitar. 'cause I still like selling other ones as originals." Jones told Gibson in 2008 he has tried to buy back his original from "this woman", but "I don't know if it's the real one, or if I'm gettin' taken for a ride." Best not to ask.

OTHER FAMOUSLY PASSED-ON GUITARS INCLUDE...

George Harrison's rosewood *Let It Be* Fender Telecaster, given to Delaney Bramlett, was bought at auction on behalf of Olivia Harrison for $470k. George's red '64 SG (circa *Revolver*) was given to Badfinger's Pete Hamm (RIP) and sold at auction for £294k.

Duane Eddy's 1959 sunburst Fender Strat was later sold by son Chris Eddy, with approval, to Vince Gill.

Paul Weller's Jam-era white *Going Underground* Rickenbacker 330 with 'P' sticker was given to Noel Gallagher.

The '59 sunburst Les Paul belonging to The Stone Roses' John Squire (used on *Second Coming*) used to belong to Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen and is apparently now owned by Richie Sambora.

Stephen Stills' 1959 sunburst Les Paul Standard w/Bigsby was sold to sessioneer Waddy Wachtel (later in Keith Richards' band). See Gibson's Collector's Choice #14.

Jeff Beck also bought a Gibson Les Paul off Nielsen in Chicago for $350 in 69, after Beck broke his own mid-tour. Nielsen wasn't even famous then.

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MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

THE Guitar & Bass INTERVIEW

"Compared to playing solo acoustic, playing electric in a band is pretty easy"

Eric Johnson has finally completed what he started a decade ago: his first acoustic album. *EJ* mixes his own songs and covers, instrumental and sung, and sees the Texan tone maestro take new approaches to his renowned mastery of guitar...

Story **Michael Stephens** Photography **Paul Alexander Knox**

"I've always wanted to do this, but... 'stuff' just kept getting in the way," laughs Eric Johnson. It's taken 10 years for Johnson to finally complete an acoustic album, despite quite a few acoustic tours over many years, but that's no surprise really.

This is a guitarist so obsessed with sound he once used 16 production/engineering/mix contributors on one single album, 1996's *Venus Isle*. Long-time coming or not, *EJ* shows EJ to be just as able on basic wood and wire as he is with his fabled collection of vintage electrics, boutique amps and stompbox batteries (he claims he can hear the difference between brands, don't you know?). In fact, recording *EJ* went so well, the guitarist/pianist/singer says: "I've got a lot more songs. I want to start recording volume two this winter." That remains to be seen. First off, there's the story of how Johnson came to acoustic guitar in the first place...

Learning in reverse

One thing you won't hear Johnson ascribe is the well-worn argument that it's always best to learn to play guitar first on acoustic. Why? Because it's the exact opposite of what he did. Johnson's first instrument was in fact piano, taking formal lessons and studying classical music until 13, but his interest faded after he started playing electric aged 11, inspired by his love of The Ventures, The Rolling Stones and The Kinks. "I guess my route to acoustic was unusual," Johnson notes.

>

Eric playing his Maton acoustic, his preferred guitar for live, electrified work

"My route to acoustic was unusual. I was 18 or 19 before I owned an acoustic"

"I was 18 or 19 before I owned an acoustic. I'd dabbled on other people's, but I wouldn't have said, 'I play acoustic guitar'. But that was the same time I started writing songs, too, so maybe that had something to do with it."

Q Did that 'reverse' journey mean a completely different approach for you when it came to learning acoustic?

"It's a totally different thing for me. Well, the fretting hand is obviously similar, but for my right hand it's a different approach. Even though I could play electric pretty good, when I started on acoustic it was all just strumming three chords! It took me a good few years to learn how to fingerpick well, to really articulate. I listened to a lot of different music – classical guitar, as well as flamenco and folk players – and absorbing all that took a while."

Q Do you believe playing solo acoustic offers different opportunities, but also limitations in that you need to deliver bass, partial or implied chords and melody all at once?

"I think it does. I mean, there are solo electric players who play that way too, Ted Greene [lauded solo fingerstyle electric player and teacher, 1946-2005] and Charlie Hunter [known for his eight-string electrics]. So it's not isolated to acoustic playing, but it's highlighted, because if you're going to play a song on acoustic solo all those elements of a song are a lot more imminent. So there's a lot more thought going in to the structure and writing, what chords are played or implied, because you're trying to tell a whole story just on one instrument. But, y'know, you can play acoustic just by strumming a few chords and singing. I like that, too."

Q How long was it before you got 'good' on acoustic? By 15, you were already a pro electric player (in psych-rock group Mariani)

"I'm still learning! To use just one instrument to orchestrate using a bass part, and to simultaneously play the melody, maybe sing as well... it's a lot to work on. Compared to playing solo acoustic, playing electric in a band is pretty easy."

Q Who did you look to for inspiration when you really got into acoustic?

"It was the early Joni Mitchell folk albums, Bert Jansch, Paul Simon, James Taylor. I studied the Merle Travis technique, Doc Watson, Bob Dylan. Later on, I was a big fan of Michael Hedges, Tommy Emmanuel, Doyle Dykes. Those are the guys I really look up to now, they're so adept at fingerpicking."

Q You're a fan of the Japanese koto, at least to listen to: do you try to get that sort of tone on a standard Western acoustic?

"Well, I wouldn't say I do that but I am keen to utilise all the different timbres you can get from just an acoustic. Whether it's playing with your nail or flesh, picking near the bridge or towards the neck... that an acoustic that has no amp or effects per se is still capable of so many tonalities is the really interesting part for me."

Q Do you use capos or open tunings on *EJ* to expand that palette?

"I used a capo on a few tracks, but I didn't use any open tunings. I drop the E to D occasionally. I do love the sound of open tunings, but to play them I really have to sit down and learn the song note-for-note and just copy it, consciously. As soon as I look at the fretboard I automatically think, 'Well, that's a B or E in standard tuning', and if it's not I get confused. Really confused. I'm not real good at open tunings, I guess."

Capturing the tones

Johnson's claim to be "not real good" at anything is, of course, somewhat baffling when you hear *EJ*. His playing throughout is faultless and all the more impressive when he says his acoustic guitar tracks were cut live with a maximum of four takes. Even the vocal tracks were recorded in one. "It was absolutely a conscious decision," Johnson says. "An >

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The Martin Eric Johnson Signature

> "An acoustic record, to me, has to be more vibey, organic, performance-based"

acoustic record, to me, has to be more vibey, organic, performance-based. It would be more apparent than ever if I tried to make a heavily overdubbed acoustic record, I don't think that would translate at all."

Q Was that hard to balance with your admitted perfectionism when it comes to your electric albums?

"Not so much anymore. I've been getting towards more live recording for my electric records, too; I'm not quite as hung-up on the perfection as I used to be and that's how I want to record more in the future. It was a challenge, though. I just had to practise, practise, practise before I recorded. I do that anyway, but it's quite pressurised in an acoustic situation. I tried to limit each song to three or four takes and pick the best one. There were quite a few where a song didn't work on the first two takes, so I moved on to another song... then came back to the first on a different day. I didn't want to get bogged down making something work when it wasn't. Too many 'fingerprints of the mind'."

Q The stripped-back ethos extended to your guitars, too: you play numerous electrics on your other albums, but you say this was recorded on just two guitars – a Martin D-45 and a Ramirez nylon-string...

"Yeah, mainly my Martin. In the early 80s, most of my guitars got stolen from my apartment and at that point I was pretty destitute anyway. I was only just making enough money to eat, y'know? So my dad [now deceased] bought me this Martin D-45 as a gift to try and replace all the guitars I'd had stolen. So it has real sentimental value to me."

Q What else makes your D-45 special?

"Well, I should point out it's not vintage, it was made in 1980. It's a reissue of a pre-war D-45 with scalloped bracing and snowflake inlay. It's just a real cool guitar. It's not the loudest guitar by any means, but for some reason it records the best in the studio of all the acoustics I have."

Q Live, though, you seem to prefer your Maton CS Classic...

"That's true. Of all my acoustics, the Matons have the best electrified, live tone. But in the studio, it's all about balance. When you play a note on the third or fourth fret on the A or D string, a lot of acoustics seem to have this accentuated woofiness. So I have to avoid that. And my Martin's not like that at all."

Q That's not what you'd normally expect from a dreadnought over an OM, though?

"Typically, people will tell you that a triple-0 will record better than a dreadnought and I think they're probably right: that dreadnoughts are fun for the player, right, and the listener if you're playing in a small room. But in the studio, not so much, as they can get a little boomy. But I've tried triple-0s and, to me, they just have a different sort of boominess. And, likewise, I've heard dreadnoughts that aren't boomy. So, as with all guitars, the nuances vary. The way the wood on each instrument goes together, the way it has dried out... I've yet to find a hard and fast rule for acoustics, to be honest."

Q And what about the Ramirez nylon-string on the track *Serinidad*?

"I've had that since the 90s. I was in South Carolina, popped into a music store, as I do... It had been in the back of the store, unsold, since 1967! The guy brought it out and I just loved it. I bought it immediately."

Q The sound on *EJ* is crystal clear and, as you say, very balanced: can you offer any good tone tips on recording acoustic guitar, which is often a bugbear for many players?

"Well, all I can say is what I do. I have some K&K [Pure Mini model] transducer pickups I use with my Martin, but on this album not so much. It was just a microphone with a tiny amount of pickup on a few tracks. Mainly, I just use microphones, Neumann KM 56s. >

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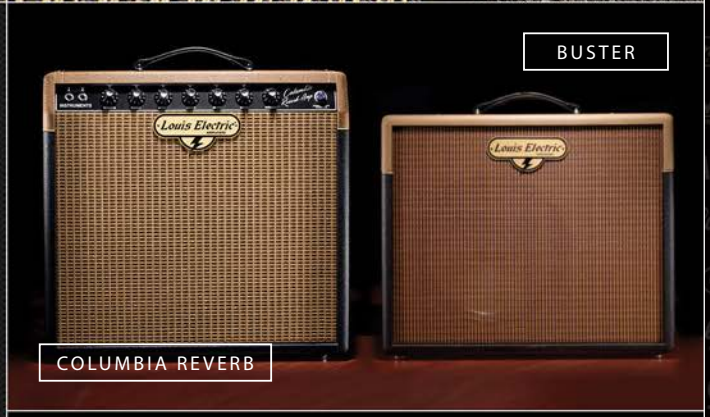

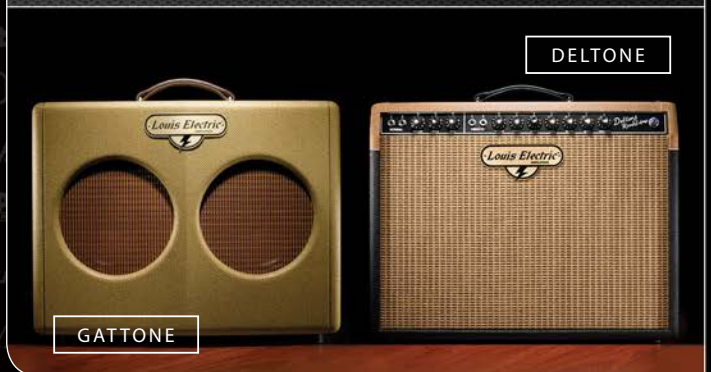

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Johnson employed a capo for some of the compositions on *EJ*

> "I love Paul Simon's fingerpicking, and to use that as the medium to write so many songs..."

They have a small diaphragm, and a small diaphragm doesn't seem to accentuate all those 150-200Hz cycle frequencies that can get over-exaggerated when you're recording acoustic. Then, EQ and compression. If you're recording with just microphones, I think compression is very important. It gives everything a little more power."

Under the covers

As well as Johnson's own impeccably crafted originals, *EJ* features three covers: one is a baffling instro-duet with Doyle Dykes on Les Paul and Mary Ford's *The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise*, the others are familiar targets for Johnson: Paul Simon (a rhythmically reworked instrumental *Mrs Robinson*) and Jimi Hendrix (a gently lyrical take on *One Rainy Wish*).

"I just love Paul Simon's fingerpicking," says Johnson, who has also previously covered his *Kathy's Song* and *April Come She Will*. "And to use that as the medium to write so many great songs, I find that really alluring. I don't know why I came up with that rhythm for *Mrs Robinson*. I don't even listen to that song much, I listen more to his earlier albums. But I wanted something up-tempo to open the record, something known, but different. And it turns out it was working the rhythm a bit. Some of my melodies are not quite there on it, but I think it's enough for you to know what the song is."

Hendrix, as for so many other guitarists, remains a touchstone of genius for Johnson in the electric realm, but his own acoustic reading of *One Rainy Wish* is bold indeed.

"I actually did two versions of that," he reveals. "One is a more classical approach that I hope to put on volume two. Now, that took me a long time to work out. But the one on the record now is still a challenge. I wanted to take the song in a different direction, but to me that's the sign of a good song. You can interpret it in so many ways.

"I just think it's one of Jimi's most beautiful songs. I had to do it differently, because I'm not going to risk being compared to the original. It also highlights just how versatile a song it is. Working for a symphony or on a single acoutsic guitar: that's the sign, to me, of a good song. I hope I did OK..."

Yep. When it comes to guitar, Eric Johnson can be sure he's doing more than "OK".

EJ'S SIX PICK OF PICKERS

If you're an Eric Johnson fan but new to acoustic fingerpicking, here's some recommended listening from his favourite acoustic players...

JONI MITCHELL
Ladies Of The Canyon & Blue

Mitchell is a unique fingerstyle player, but this 1970 album (and '71's *Blue*) are Johnson's favourites for her songs: "brilliant folk guitar records". *Ladies...* includes commercial breakthrough *Big Yellow Taxi*.

JAMES TAYLOR
Sweet Baby James

Really, it could be this 1970 or any other JT album. Johnson calls Taylor's playing "uniquely amazing. It doesn't jump out and say, 'Yeah, I'm a really great player'." EJ's a big fan of JT's version of *Up On The Roof*.

CHET ATKINS & MERLE TRAVIS
The Atkins Travis Traveling Show

Grammy-winning pickin' tear-up from '74, also featuring Jerry Reed. Johnson composed *Tribute To Jerry Reed* for simultaneous flatpick and fingerpick in the 70s, and it was later released on his own *Bloom* album (2005).

CHET ATKINS & TOMMY EMMANUEL
The Day Finger Pickers Took Over The World

A double whammy of EJ pickin' favourites from '97, and Atkins' last album of original songs. Like Emmanuel, Johnson plays Maton acoustics as well as Martins.

MICHAEL HEDGES
Aerial Boundaries

A legend among acoustic stylists, Hedges (1953-1997) cut this acoustic/new age milestone in '84. Says Johnson: "This is when the acoustic guitar changed and was reinvented in an amazing way."

PAUL SIMON
The Paul Simon Songbook

Simon's first solo album (1965), featuring Eric favourites *Kathy's Song* and *April, She Will Come*. Solo guitar and voice, straight to mic – just like the guitars on *EJ*.

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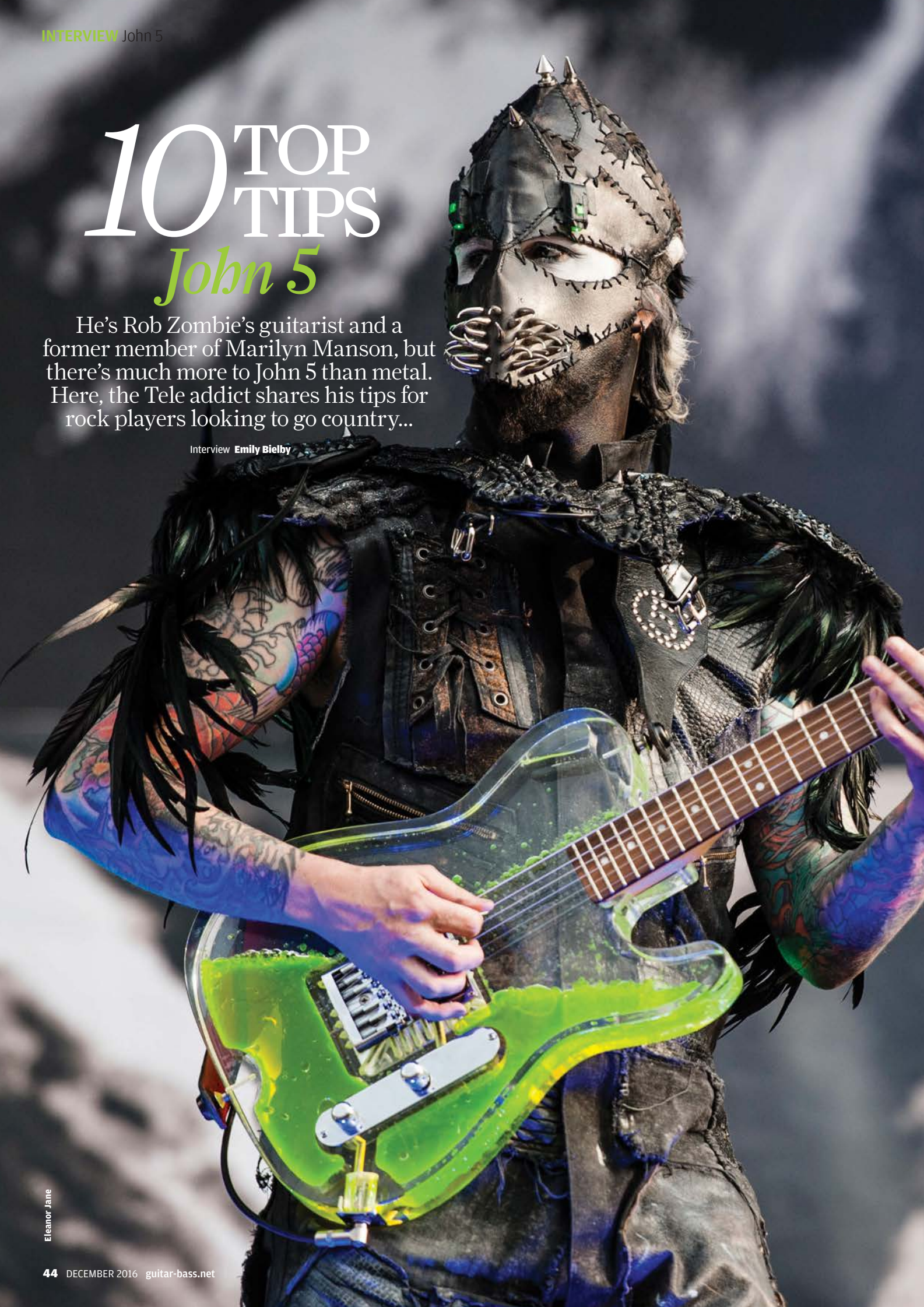
D'Angelico NEW YORK

10 TOP TIPS
John 5

He's Rob Zombie's guitarist and a former member of Marilyn Manson, but there's much more to John 5 than metal. Here, the Tele addict shares his tips for rock players looking to go country...

Interview **Emily Bielby**



Eleanor Jane

1 Take it slow

"Look for a player you really enjoy who influences you, it could be anyone, and then whomever it may be – Roy Clark, Chet Atkins, Scotty Anderson – we have the power of the internet now and I would say go and look at some of these lessons and take it very slowly because it's like learning a brand new language. It's completely foreign from rock but it's a lot of fun because it's something that will just escalate your playing."

2 Experiment, but not too much

"There are many things you can do – there's chicken pickin', fingerstyle, banjo rolls, doublestops and Travis picking; there's all sorts of things to do, but don't go too crazy on trying to learn everything. Pick a certain thing, like chicken pickin', and slowly try to work that into your own playing. This is very important because you'll learn a certain style and if you put that into your own music, you'll always be playing it."

3 Use a metronome

"Take one song and perform it along with the CD or computer, however you're listening to music, and play along with that song, just keep playing it over and over again. Then, this is what I do, play it with a metronome and record yourself, then listen back because you'll hear yourself and you'll hear what's going on and it will help your playing so much."

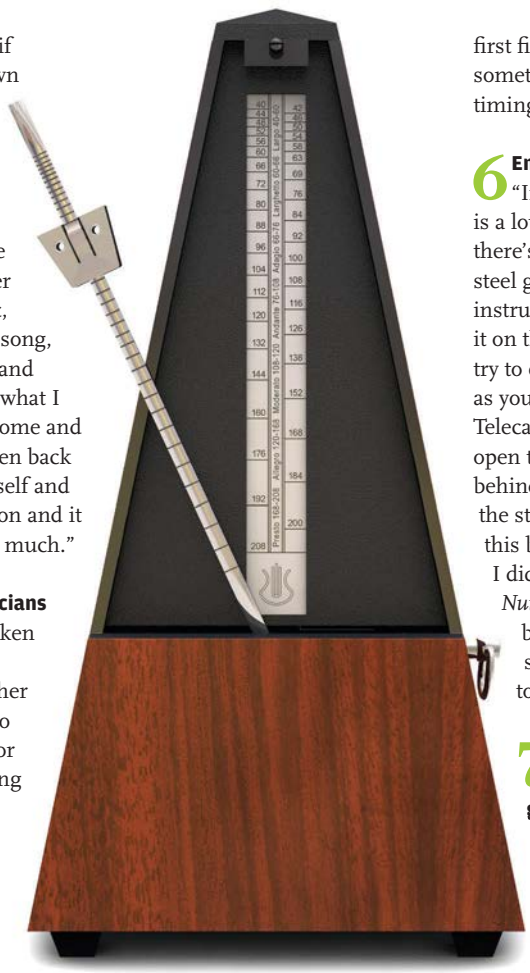
4 Play with other musicians

"Once you have chicken pickin' down, and your other styles, play with other musicians. You're used to playing with distortion for rock; you're used to having pedals and maybe even a whammy bar, a lot of things, but with country music you're up there with just a clean sound. So, it's important to play and perform with other musicians because it's different from just playing in your room, and with country music the time signatures and having good timing is really important. If you listen to a lot of country players, it's just like listening to a record; I mean they sound so good, it sounds phenomenal because it's so clean."

5 Allow for time

"When you're using a lot of doublestops or banjo rolls, timing is everything. So if you're using your right hand, a big part of it is just how good your timing is. It's all created with a rhythm with your thumb and your first finger, second finger and sometimes your third finger, so timing is very important."

> "When you're using a lot of doublestops or banjo rolls, timing is everything."



6 Emulate and innovate

"In country music, there is a lot of string bending and there's a lot of lap steel and pedal steel guitar. They're such great instruments and I try to emulate it on the guitar. So I would say try to emulate a lap steel as much as you can on the guitar; I use a Telecaster and I will put it into an open tuning and play the songs behind the nut of the guitar so all the strings ring out and it creates this beautiful sound.

I did a song called *Behind The Nut Love*. Please look that up because it's a really cool-sounding pedal steel-esque tone created using a guitar."

7 Incorporate country styles into regular guitar playing

"I went from such a heavy-rock band and I play this crazy country music along with it and it's different, >

Eleanor Jane

and being different is okay because you are doing something else that everyone else isn't doing, because it's something that's really hard to do. Anything you want to do well is going to take a lot of practice, a lot of hours, a lot of dedication and a lot of frustration, but if you really want to do it, just try to master it and try to incorporate it into your playing. If you incorporate it into your playing, then you will always be practising it because with rock music you're playing with a pick but in a certain section of a song, if there is an open-string lick or banjo or doublestop or anything like that, it's great to have that in your music because you're practising that too."

> "Anything you want to do well is going to take a lot of practice, a lot of hours of dedication"

8 Change things up

"I love Western swing, like Chet Atkins or Jerry Reed, because it's a completely different style; in most cases, you're not even using a pick you're just using your fingers, and you're doing the bassline along with the melody – it's just a beautiful art form. It's a great way to play and it really changes things up. I'm going to play some concerts over in the UK and we put a lot of that kinda style in our sets. It's so different because it's a heavy-rock concert, but when you break out some bluegrass or Western swing it really takes the crowd by surprise. So, try to learn that and dabble with Western swing or that kind of style because it's such an amazing style for guitar players."

Getty Images

9 Use open-string licks

"This is very cool and very foreign to rock playing because of the fact there is usually so much distortion, and when you play open-string licks they need to chime and they need to all roll in to each other, but with rock it's very difficult to do that because it doesn't sound very good with distortion. There's a song I've done called *Making Monsters*, and there's a lick and it's kind of muted, but it has distortion. I incorporated this chicken pickin' open string with distortion and it sounds very cool. These open-string licks are so much fun and they sound great; they're difficult but it really is an amazing sound."

10 Have fun

"If you don't dig country music, don't do it, but if you like the sound of it you're going to have so much fun with it, because I did and it's changed my life and the way I play. It's just an amazing style of guitar playing, so I would say just enjoy it and have fun with it."

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DIY WORKSHOP

GRETSCH CONVERSION PROJECT

In the latest instalment of *G&B*'s Gretsch conversion project, **HUW PRICE** tackles the headstock, finishes the neck and reshapes the f-holes

PART 4

1 The top section of the jig slides to set the cut depth and the bolts hold it in position. You can just see the router bit underneath, which protrudes 1.5mm beyond the guide. The first binding channel has just been cut in the headstock

2 Although flexible, the binding will bend only so far without snapping. This sidepiece has been heated with a hairdryer to pre-form the bend

3 Masking tape holds the binding in place while the binding/acetone paste sets. It doesn't take long

4 The excess lengths have been trimmed, the sides scraped flush and the headstock binding is complete

Those of you who have been following this Gretsch restoration may have been wondering why there haven't been any recent updates. The honest answer is that I was feeling pretty nervous about routing the headstock for binding. I wasn't sure how to go about it, so I'd been putting it off. Eventually, I figured out a way to do it and this month I'll show you how the neck was completed, and the f-holes repaired and reshaped. Hang on because it's about to get dusty.

Cutting the binding channel

I have bound one or two headstocks before, but I was dealing with uncarved necks from acoustic guitar kits. Everything was nice and square all around the headstocks and all the way up to the nut slot area. Previously, I had used a Dremel tool mounted in a Stewart MacDonald router base with a guide bearing, but I'd had such fraught experiences that I'd decided never to use that set-up again for serious routing.

One of the scarier aspects of this sort of project is the juxtaposition of irreplaceable vintage parts and very sharp tools. Also, the NOS headstock overlay wasn't cheap and I was very anxious not to mess it up. This guitar's build quality complicated matters further because none of the headstock's side surfaces were actually square with the front. There was a noticeable and inconsistent flaring out from front to back that prohibited the use of a bearing-guided router bit.

The fact that the neck was pre-carved presented another problem because the curved areas between the lower headstock ears and the nut taper away. If I used a bearing bit in those areas, I'd end up cutting a binding channel about 5mm wide. Eventually, I settled on a strategy.

Firstly, I squared up the headstock edges as best I could using scrapers and a drum sander. I wasn't looking for perfection since this was a far from perfect example – and in a sense that's part of the charm of these old guitars. Then, using two small scraps of wood, I made an adjustable router guide.

I screwed the bottom part to my router table's surface with two bolts sticking up through it. I made a long slot cut along the centre line of the second part with a rounded tip then pushed the bolts through the slot and the position of the sliding section could be held firm with nuts and washers. The height of the cut was set using the router's locking plunge feature and the rounded end of the guide tool restricted the depth of the cut **1**.

After testing the router bit and tool settings using scrap wood and a binding offcut, I felt pretty confident. So I gritted my teeth, placed the headstock face down on the router table and went for it. To my immense relief, it worked but I needed to deepen the cut

on one side. I marked the current position of the router guide using a sharp pencil, adjusted it by about 0.5mm, tightened the fixing nuts and cut again.

The curves between the bottom ears and the nut were somewhat trickier to execute because the taper in that area wasn't consistent. I decided, therefore, on a different approach and made a router template from scrap plywood. I marked the curves onto the plywood, cut them out with a fret saw then finessed the curve using a drum sander attached to my drill press, following a line a binding's width inside the original line to achieve the required cut depth.

I attached the completed template to the headstock front with some double-sided tape and a bearing bit in the router was set to run along the template curve and cut the channel to the right height. Again, this went well and I breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Fixing the binding

The headstock binding is light ivory cream ABS plastic measuring 2x1.5mm from Rothko and Frost in Gloucestershire. I cut a section into small pieces, put them into a jar and covered them with acetone. With the lid on the jar, I sealed it with tape and overnight the plastic dissolved into a paste about the same consistency as double cream.

Believe it or not, this is the 'glue' I used to attach the binding. Firstly, however, I had to pre-shape the binding to conform with the headstock curves because it can snap when bent too far. The pre-shaping was done by heating the binding with a hairdryer, then I slathered the acetone mix all along the cut channel on the bass side 2.

I lined up the binding, pressed it into position and used multiple strips of masking tape to hold it firm as the acetone mix 'welded' itself to the binding and wood 3. A slight overhang was left at each end and I decided to butt joint the top section just as Gretsch did. No mitre joints for Gretsch. The binding went on in three sections and was set after a couple of hours. The acetone paste worked even better than I had expected, and it has the added advantage of filling any gaps and compensating for unevenness.

Since the channel was cut fairly accurately, very little Stanley blade scraping was needed to make the binding flush with the wood. Ultimately, the binding depth fluctuates a bit, but so did the binding on the originals, so I'm happy to live with it 4. Small guide holes were drilled out from the back and I used a reamer to widen the holes for the tuner bushings 5. Finally, I was able to cut and file away the headstock overlay to reveal the truss-rod scoop 6.

Fixing the board

Much restoration work had already gone into the fingerboard, with an >

5 The bass-side holes have been reamed out for the tuner bushings. The small holes on the treble side are guide holes to direct the reamer tool

6 With the bushing holes reamed to the correct diameter and the truss-rod scoop carved out, work on the headstock is complete

7 You can tell when the fret ends are flush because the sound changes from a metallic rasp to a smoother swoosh and the dust changes colour as you file into the binding

8 It's nasty stuff to use, but wire wool cleans off the Super Glue squeeze out, smoothes the board and starts the fret-polishing procedure

9 Pins at each end of the fingerboard will help to position the fingerboard and hold it steady when it's being glued to the neck

additional maple layer glued to the back to make up for the loss of depth from sanding and re-contouring the front. The binding had been attached, too, so what followed was a straightforward fret installation.

Actually 'straightforward' is probably overstating it, because the fret slots were somewhat inconsistent. Some frets seated fairly well but others didn't. Very quickly, I realised that I would need to glue in the frets and press them into position. I used Super Glue, a 9.5-inch radius block and a clamp, working one fret at a time.

The fret ends were bevelled with the fingerboard board taped to a flat surface. Installing the frets had introduced a very slight back bow to the fingerboard, but very little finger pressure was needed to flatten the board, so I wasn't too concerned **7**. Although the bevelling went well, the end result looked pretty horrible, but once the Super Glue squeeze out had been cleaned up with wire wool, I started feeling better about it **8**.

Those who read the second part of this restoration feature may recall that I drilled two locating pinholes – at the first and 20th frets. So, before I installed the frets, I drilled the holes through the new veneer base of the fingerboard. The holes were drilled to accommodate tiny locating pins that would ensure the fingerboard went back onto the neck in the correct position and stop it sliding around on slippery glue **9**.

I decided to go with hot hide glue because that was what Gretsch used and it will allow a future restorer to dismantle the neck if required. I swotted up on hide glue preparation, poured some glue pearls into a jam jar, added the recommended quantity of water then set the jar aside overnight.

The glue pearls looked like frogspawn the following morning when I placed the jam jar in a saucepan of water and heated the glue gradually. Temperature is crucial and I was aiming for 60 degrees centigrade. To get it right, I bought a cooking thermometer from Tesco for £4 and kept it in the glue pot the whole time **10**.

As it's heated, the glue becomes runny, and when it hit the right temperature I brushed it onto the back of the fingerboard, lined the board up with the pins and clamped it to set overnight. Once cool, you can store hide glue for a short time in the fridge or long-term in the freezer. Be sure to label it because it's not the sort of stuff you'd want to put on your toast by mistake.

Scraping by

The fingerboard sides were straight and true, but the neck itself

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wasn't. I had attempted to leave a slight binding overhang after the fingerboard was glued on, but the overhang depth was far from consistent. In some areas, it was almost as deep as the binding itself.

This inconsistency probably had more to do with play wear than with shoddy craftsmanship. The neck wood in the 'cowboy chord' area showed a lot of oxidation, which means the finish had worn away through playing, and some of the wood had been worn away too. This had resulted in an asymmetrical profile that actually felt extremely comfortable. The only solution was to trim the binding to conform to the neckwear – as if it had been on the guitar since new and had worn along with everything else 11.

At the other end, the fingerboard extension had ended up about 0.5mm wider than the binding; so the binding overhang was scraped using a fresh Stanley knife blade. I took care to follow the neck contour and avoid creating a lumpy 'shoulder' at the wood/binding transition. The wood was sanded flush to the binding at the top end using a flat block and I took the opportunity to sand out all the scratches and uneven staining.

Fixing the holes

Two differences between the Anniversary and 6120 f-holes are the shape and the binding. Only the 6120's had f-hole binding and the Anniversary's holes were squared off rather than pointed. My friend Daniel Nicholas sent over some highly detailed photos of his 6120's f-holes with a ruler in shot. This allowed me to print off the photo to exact scale to make a 6120-shaped f-hole template 12.

I used a craft knife to cut out the f-hole shape along the inside binding line in the photo and placed it over the Anniversary's f-holes to determine how much modification would be needed. As it turned out, I needed to remove only small quantities of wood to sharpen the square cuts to points and widen the gaps very slightly.

Having marked the 6120 f-hole outlines onto the Anniversary top, I reshaped the f-holes using a rasp, files and sandpaper. Everything went smoothly and quickly on the bass side. However, there was a slight complication with the treble-side f-hole.

You may recall from previous articles that the treble-side hole was slightly damaged and a section under the pickguard area had snapped off. I made a straight diagonal cut across the damaged area with a fine-toothed veneer saw 13. Next, I cut straight across a scrap piece of five-layer plywood, >

10 60 degrees celsius is the recommended temperature for hide glue. You can find one of these temperature gauges in the kitchen department of Tesco and other supermarkets

11 The grey oxidised wood is evidence of exposure and play wear. I wanted to keep the look while scraping the fingerboard binding flush with the neck

12 Spot the differences between a 6120 f-hole on top and an Anniversary f-hole beneath. The new f-hole outline has already been marked onto the wood

13 This is the cut line chosen to begin the f-hole repair

14 The body has been cut and the repair patch is ready to be glued on

15 The treble-side f-hole has been patched and reshaped ready for binding

going two layers deep to match the thickness of the Anniversary top and chiselled out a ledge 14.

The plywood butted up against my diagonal cut in the Anniversary top and the ledge provided a gluing surface to attach the patch from the back. Cascamite glue seemed like the best option, and once it was set I made a template from the other hole, transferred the outline onto the patch and reshaped the area. The joint felt extremely solid and I used two-pack wood filler to fill any gaps and smooth the transitions 15.

Admittedly, it's not the finest bit of woodworking you'll ever see, and if I were simply planning to respray the top the repair would be obvious. However, that was never my plan. This three-ply top had lost so much of its original thickness through at least two stripdowns that the top layer of ply was almost completely sanded through.

The top's tap tone was also flubby and indistinct, which may account partly for the dull and muted tone I heard when I first strung up the guitar before restoration began. So, given all the extra pickup screw holes, f-hole damage and loss of thickness, my intention from the start had been to re-veneer the top. Unfortunately, you'll have to wait for the next instalment to see how that turns out.

I'd like to sign off by mentioning two good friends who have helped out with this project from the start. Firstly, Tony Berrington, who dragged his gorgeous '59 6120 all the way to Wales for me to prod, poke and measure. Secondly, Daniel Nicholas, who sent incredibly detailed reference pictures of two vintage 6120s, along with meticulous measurements of every bit of binding, inlay, dot and hole. Thanks fellas.

NEXT MONTH...

The project draws towards its conclusion as the top is re-veneered, the trestle bracing installed and this long-suffering Gretsch is put back together. If things go well, we might even string it up...

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Student guitars reinvented for a new generation? **CHRIS VINNICOMBE** gives them a workout...

If you've spent any time browsing guitar gear on your smartphone or computer lately – and let's be honest here, it's all too easy to get into the habit of looking at pictures of other people's guitars more often than you pick up and play your own – then you may have noticed that there's a whole generation of players out there who have invested more money in the process of assembling a pedalboard than they have in buying either their guitar or amplifier.

When it comes to guitars, like the alternative-rock and grunge guitarists of the late 1980s and early 90s that blazed a trail for them to follow, many hip modern-day experimentalists and indie noiseniks turn to Fender's less mainstream designs for inspiration. You don't get to be one of the biggest fish in the pond without street smarts, and you can be sure that Fender has noticed that not only are the likes of the Jaguar, Jazzmaster and Mustang enjoying a second renaissance, there are also plenty of boutique builders taking an offset slice of Fullerton pie. Fender's response to competition and demand? Launch a slew of cool new models at a made-in-Mexico price point that's hard for the guitar-buying public to resist and impossible for smaller builders to compete with.

In this instance, market forces have helped to create products with plenty of personality. On their launch at Summer NAMM in Nashville in June, like many other of the show's attendees, we – complete with jetlag, artisanal hangovers and the sound of loud country music still ringing in our ears – saw the new-for-2016 Offset series in its attractive rainbow of colours hanging from the wall of the Fender booth and thought that it was good.

The Offset range comprises a pair of Mustang electrics – one with a maple 'board and the traditional pair of single coils, the other a 'Mustang 90' featuring a rosewood 'board and a pair of P-90-style pickups – a Mustang Bass PJ with Precision and Jazz Bass pickups and two Duo-Sonics, one with two single coils >

The Duo-Sonic's bridge humbucker has plenty of strident aggression

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Fender Duo-Sonic HS

Also new for 2016, the SS version of the **Fender Duo-Sonic £509** has a maple fingerboard in Torino Red, Arctic White and Capri Orange. The **PureSalem Jimmy $860** is a HS with a twist on the hot-rod Duo-Sonic/Mustang theme with its mahogany body and neck and mini-ashtray, compensated three-saddle bridge.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Fender Mustang 90

For more of a vintage-style experience, including a vibrato, check out the **Squier Vintage Modified Mustang £335**. 2016's SS incarnation of the Mustang comes with a maple 'board in Olympic White, Black and Olive finishes. If you want two P-90s in a bolt-on offset and money is no object, check out the **Novo Guitars Serus J £2,899** immediately.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE

Mustang Bass PJ

For even more of a cheap and cheerful vibe, check out the **Squier Bronco Bass £190**. The **Squier Jaguar Bass Special SS £250** has P and J pickups and a 30-inch scale and is another safe bet. Also, try the **Danelectro '56 Bass £549**.

and the HS model with, you guessed it, a bridge humbucker and neck single coil.

That is all fine and dandy except for the fact that the Duo-Sonic isn't actually an offset-waist design. Although visually similar to a Mustang, Fender's 2016 Duo-Sonics echo the model's original 1956 body shape with a waist that's higher on the bass side and much closer to symmetrical than the Mustang's, which is a true offset. We confirmed this fact by drawing around the bodies of our review guitars on a roll of wallpaper with a Sharpie and then comparing the outlines.

Just to confuse matters further, Fender redesigned the Duo-Sonic in 1964, renamed it the Duo-Sonic II and switched to the same body shape as the Mustang, itself newly launched that year. The Duo-Sonic also got a larger, Mustang-style headstock as part of the makeover, but Fender has opted to use each model's original headstock shape for 2016. Although all pre-64 Duo-Sonics had a 22.5-inch scale length and it remained an option right up until the model was discontinued in 1969, the full 24 inches is mandatory today.

For the purposes of this review, we selected the Mustang 90 and Duo-Sonic HS, along with the Mustang Bass PJ. The six-string electrics share Strat-style hardtail bridges with bent steel saddles and similar C-shaped, satin polyurethane-finished necks with 22 medium-jumbo frets and 9.5-inch fingerboard radii. The Mustang Bass PJ's Jazz Bass-style 38mm nut width combined with a very similar neck depth to the guitars make it feel very much like a member of the same family, while the 30-inch scale makes

getting around the 19 medium-jumbo frets a breeze, even for guitarists.

Descended from student models they may be, but all three of these instruments are compact, robust and optimised for high-energy stage performances. The build quality is consistently neat across the range, and we find very little to complain about, especially in this price bracket. Out of the box, the Mustang 90's jack socket doesn't grab hold of a jack plug quite as tightly as it should, resulting in a little bit of unwanted movement and a few coughs and splutters. Thankfully, it's a quick fix, made even easier by most of the wiring being situated on a separate plate held in place by just three screws – there's no slackening of the strings required to gain access.

In use

Using a fairly ballsy Telecaster into a blackface amp to orientate our ears, then switching over to the Mustang 90, there's an immediate hike in output, with much more emphasis on the lower-mids and a bigger bottom end. It doesn't feel lacking in sustain, either – it's thick and chewy when you add gain and would make an excellent foil for a guitar with spikier-sounding single coils in the same band. There's still plenty of treble and attack, especially with edgier amp tones or a dirtbox, but the Mustang 90 manages to avoid eyeball-slicing shrillness easily.

When played clean, the middle and neck pickup settings are surprisingly rich. The midrange is a little too pronounced for Johnny Marr-esque clean chime, but there are a lot of cool tones here in a compact package. It's funny how certain instruments draw a direct line to a specific area of influence: suddenly we're in the realms

SHORT-SCALE AND SWEET

Elsewhere in Fender's new Offset range are Mustang and Duo-Sonic models armed with a more traditional pair of single-coil pickups. Both guitars have maple fingerboards; the Mustang (£629) is available in Black (pictured), Olive Green and Olympic White and the Duo-Sonic (£509) comes in Torino Red (above), Arctic White and Capri Orange.

Build quality is consistently neat, and we find very little to complain about, especially in this price bracket

of Pacific Northwest indie bands such as Death Cab For Cutie, combining pretty arpeggios with movable chord shapes, droning pedal notes and plentiful dissonance.

The Duo-Sonic HS is immediately more brash, with a natural jangle and more air. The neck single coil delivers plenty of snap, while pulling the tone pot splits the bridge humbucker for hollower, springier single-coil sounds. It suits funkier and choppier styles, and the Duo-Sonic's brighter attack is closer to what we'd expect from a Fender of this size and scale length. In contrast, the Mustang 90 has a surprisingly sweet voice for bluesy noodling, so it might be the logical step into the short-scale offset camp for a player from more of a blues-rock background.

Given the Duo-Sonic's appearance, readers of a certain age and persuasion will understand why we couldn't resist plugging in a distortion box and busting out some Nirvana riffs – the humbucker is certainly strident enough for the task and it really does wind back the clock to making a racket in cold garages while wearing flannel shirts and dirty Converse daps. Arguably, over time, only the choice of rehearsal space has improved...

The Mustang Bass PJ is a little headstock-heavy when strapped on, but its compact proportions, slim neck dimensions and short scale more than make up for it when it comes to playability. The split pickup handles those cover-all-genres Precision tones with admirable punch from a small package, while the middle and bridge settings take you into nasal Jazz Bass territory, albeit with a noticeably lower output.

If you want to impersonate a baritone guitar at the flick of a switch, select the bridge pickup and just add atmospheric reverb and tremolo. You might also consider obtaining a pair of red velvet curtains and learning to speak backwards for the full *Twin Peaks* experience.

As either a guitarist-friendly, around-the-house bass for fun, or a compact and versatile studio instrument, the Mustang Bass PJ is almost a no-brainer purchase. Full-time bassists hankering after a more compact, lighter-sounding alternative to add to their collection should also give it a spin. If you are a player of diminutive proportions, it might even become your go-to four-string.

KEY FEATURES

Fender Duo-Sonic HS

- **PRICE** £509
- **DESCRIPTION** Double-cutaway solidbody electric guitar
- **BUILD** Alder body, C-shaped maple neck, 9.5" radius rosewood fingerboard with 22 medium-jumbo frets, synthetic bone nut, made in Mexico
- **HARDWARE** Six-saddle string-through-body hardtail bridge, Fender Standard cast/sealed tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Duo-Sonic humbucking (bridge) and single-coil (neck) pickups. Master volume, master tone (pull-push coil split), three-way toggle pickup selector switch
- **FINISH** Daphne Blue gloss polyester (as reviewed), Black, Surf Green
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **SCALE LENGTH** 24"/610mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 42.1mm at nut, 51.8mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 22.7mm at first fret, 23.1mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.4mm at nut, 52mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 6.7lbs/3kg
- **CONTACT** Fender UK & ROI 01342 331700 **fender.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Excellent value for money
+ Neat build and cool looks
+ Nicely brash range of tones

- The short scale isn't for everyone

Modern-day noiseniks and old-school fans of the Seattle sound will love this; it's more robust than vintage examples, too

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Fender Mustang 90

- **PRICE** £629
- **DESCRIPTION** Double-cutaway offset-waist solidbody electric guitar
- **BUILD** Alder body, C-shaped maple neck, 9.5" radius rosewood fingerboard with 22 medium-jumbo frets, synthetic bone nut, made in Mexico
- **HARDWARE** Six-saddle string-through-body hardtail bridge, Fender Standard cast/sealed tuners
- **ELECTRICS** 2x Mustang MP-90 single-coil pickups, master volume, master tone, three-way toggle pickup selector switch
- **FINISH** Torino Red gloss polyester (as reviewed), Olympic White, Silver
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **SCALE LENGTH** 24"/610mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 41.9mm at nut, 51.7mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 21.4mm at first fret, 23.5mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.4mm at nut, 52.8mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 6.9lbs/3.1kg

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Warmer tones with more depth than might be expected from a Mustang
+ Easy playability

- A big price jump from the Duo-Sonic
- Wonky jack socket on this example

A short-scale offset with a difference, thanks to Fender's interesting choice of pickups

8/10

KEY FEATURES

Mustang Bass PJ

- **PRICE** £759
- **DESCRIPTION** Double-cutaway offset-waist electric solidbody bass
- **BUILD** Alder body, C-shaped maple neck, 9.5" radius rosewood fingerboard with 19 medium-jumbo frets, synthetic bone nut, made in Mexico
- **HARDWARE** Four-saddle Standard bridge, vintage-style tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Vintage-style split-coil Precision Bass pickup (middle), vintage-style single-coil Jazz Bass pickup (bridge), three-way toggle pickup selector switch
- **FINISH** Olympic White gloss polyester (as reviewed), Torino Red, Sonic Blue
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **SCALE LENGTH** 30"/762mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 38.3mm at nut, 53.4mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 22.4mm at first fret, 23.8mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 28.1mm at nut, 57.5mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 8.1lbs/3.6kg

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Comfortable and compact proportions are easy to navigate
+ Feels well built
+ Suits those of shorter stature

- Slight neck dive

Punchy Precision and nasal Jazz-style tones in one compact and very cool instrument

9/10

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JAMES TRUSSART DELUXE STEELCASTER £4,550
ELECTRIC GUITAR

James Trussart Deluxe Steelcaster

Guitar & Bass AWARD CHOICE 9/10

Steely? Damn... **CHRIS VINNICOMBE** finds out if this beautiful metal machine's perforations let the flavour flood out

Full disclosure: this writer has never played a James Trussart guitar that hasn't made his piggy bank break out in a cold sweat. Plying his trade in the Echo Park neighbourhood of central Los Angeles since the turn of the millennium, there's something so achingly cool about the French luthier's creations that they succeed in uniting any given group of guitarists – however disparate their individual tastes – in unanimous lust and admiration.

Trussart's artist roster reads like a who's who of the great and the good, and the instruments he and his team build have an irritating habit of living up to every atom of the hype they've generated over the years. Now available from our friends at The North American Guitar in Fulham, it seems like a good time to remind ourselves why people cared so much about James Trussart's creations in the first place. This is going to be a tough day at the office...

Boutique guitar trends have come and gone since the Steelcaster first arrived on the scene, but on opening the alligator-patterned G&G hardcase, it's hard not to fall in love all over again with Trussart's artfully distressed collision of classic automobile and electric guitar aesthetics. Here in its Deluxe, f-holed incarnation in cream with etched red roses on the pickguard and inset head plate (this isn't just for show: Trussart says the mass it adds to the headstock increases sustain) this is one of the most attractive of Trussart's colour schemes. The rich Tobacco Red stain on the maple neck complements the paint job and aged metal parts beautifully.

Plug into an overdriving Vox or tweed and you'll immediately appreciate how gloriously alive this guitar feels

The perforated back reveals that aside from a stability-assisting rosewood block beneath the bridge, through which the strings pass, the punch-pressed steel body is almost fully hollow. Although Trussart's Fat '52 neck shape is one of our all-time favourites, this slim '62 profile is likely to have more mainstream appeal and – combined with a thin finish, a nine-inch radius rosewood 'board with lightly-rolled edges and 6105 frets – it plays like a charm.

In use

If you've encountered Thinline T-style guitars before and think you know what to expect here, think again. Through a blackface-style clean amp, there's a gorgeous mixture of Tele-like clarity and old hollowbody depth, but plug into an overdriving Vox or tweed and you'll immediately appreciate how gloriously alive this guitar feels – at stage volume, it's almost like grasping with a giant pickup as every physical noise is amplified.

There's a lot of sustain, too, and no shortage of range from the Arcane Inc pickups. A twist of the tone control turns the rambunctious squall of the bridge unit into an adenoidal lead voice somewhere between 'woman' tone and a cocked wah. The tone control is also a pull-push pot that splits the velvety neck humbucker and lends the neck and middle positions a more traditional Telecaster-style response as the sound hollows out and the output backs off. Kick in a Tube Screamer in any position at volume and, although it becomes a rollercoaster ride, you won't want it to stop.

KEY FEATURES

- **PRICE** £4,550 (including hardcase)
- **DESCRIPTION** Single-cutaway hollowbody electric, made in USA
- **BUILD** Hollow steel body with f-hole and perforated back, bolt-on '62 profile maple neck with 9-inch radius rosewood fingerboard, 21 narrow-tall 6105 frets
- **HARDWARE** Kluson vintage-style tuners, 3-saddle vintage 'ashtray' bridge with treble side shaved down for player comfort
- **ELECTRICS** Arcane Inc bridge single coil and neck humbucker, three-way blade pickup selector switch, master volume, master tone, pull tone control for coil-split
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.5"/648mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 42mm at nut, 52.8mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 21mm at first fret, 23.7mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 34.6mm at nut, 54mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 7.88lbs/3.57kg
- **FINISHES** Cream On Red Roses (as reviewed), many other finish options – see website for details
- **LEFT-HANDERS** Lefties and baritone versions are available, see website
- **CONTACT** The North American Guitar 0207 835 5597 **jamestrussart.com thenorthamericanguitar.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Rude and ballsy tones with real character
+ Supremely playable neck
+ Vibe to spare

– Some unwanted friction from the string tree when tuning
– Rockstar guitar at a rockstar price

In a boutique market bursting at the seams with clones, James Trussart's steadfast individuality is to be celebrated

9/10

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Based in Trussart's native France, **Meloduende Guitars** (meloduende.fr) builds a stylish range of aluminium-bodied instruments, including some T-style designs. Prices start at **€1,890**. The company has also taken on custom commissions from a range of name players, including Scott Holiday of Rival Sons. Here in the UK, the **Crimson Guitars** (crimsonguitars.com) **Custom Shop PAF Hollow Copper** is an aged, copper-top single-cut electric priced at **£3,400**

Milkman Sound Half Pint

Hailing from San Francisco, Milkman Sound's Tim Marcus comes from a long line of milkmen and counts John Mayer among his clients. **HUW PRICE** takes delivery of the Half Pint

KEY FEATURES

- **PRICE** £2,199
- **DESCRIPTION** One-channel single-ended 5W valve combo with reverb, tremolo and power scaling, made in USA
- **POWER RATING** 5W
- **VALVES** 2x 12AX7, 1x 12 AT7, 1x 6V6, 1x 5Y3
- **CONTROL PANEL** Hi/lo inputs, volume, treble, bass, reverb, speed, depth
- **REAR PANEL** Footswitch socket, extension speaker socket, speaker socket, fuse, VVR
- **SPEAKER** 12" ceramic Jupiter speaker, 4 ohm
- **DIMENSIONS** 505x406x241mm
- **WEIGHT** 12.7kg/27.9lbs
- **CONTACT** Andertons 01483 456777 **andertons.co.uk** **milkmansound.com**

As much as we like Fender Vibro-Champs, two major drawbacks are often cited: they're too small and boxy sounding, and there's no onboard reverb. Of course, they wouldn't be viewed with affection if they were entirely devoid of charm, but they're not quite the 'crank up at home' Princeton or Deluxe Reverb that many of us would like them to be.

The ongoing absence of a scaled up and reverberated Vibro-Champ in Fender's product line is as curious as Marshall's seeming indifference to the widespread interest in TBM 18-watters. Inevitably, other amp manufacturers have been more than happy to deliver the goods, and the Milkman Sound Half Pint does just that.

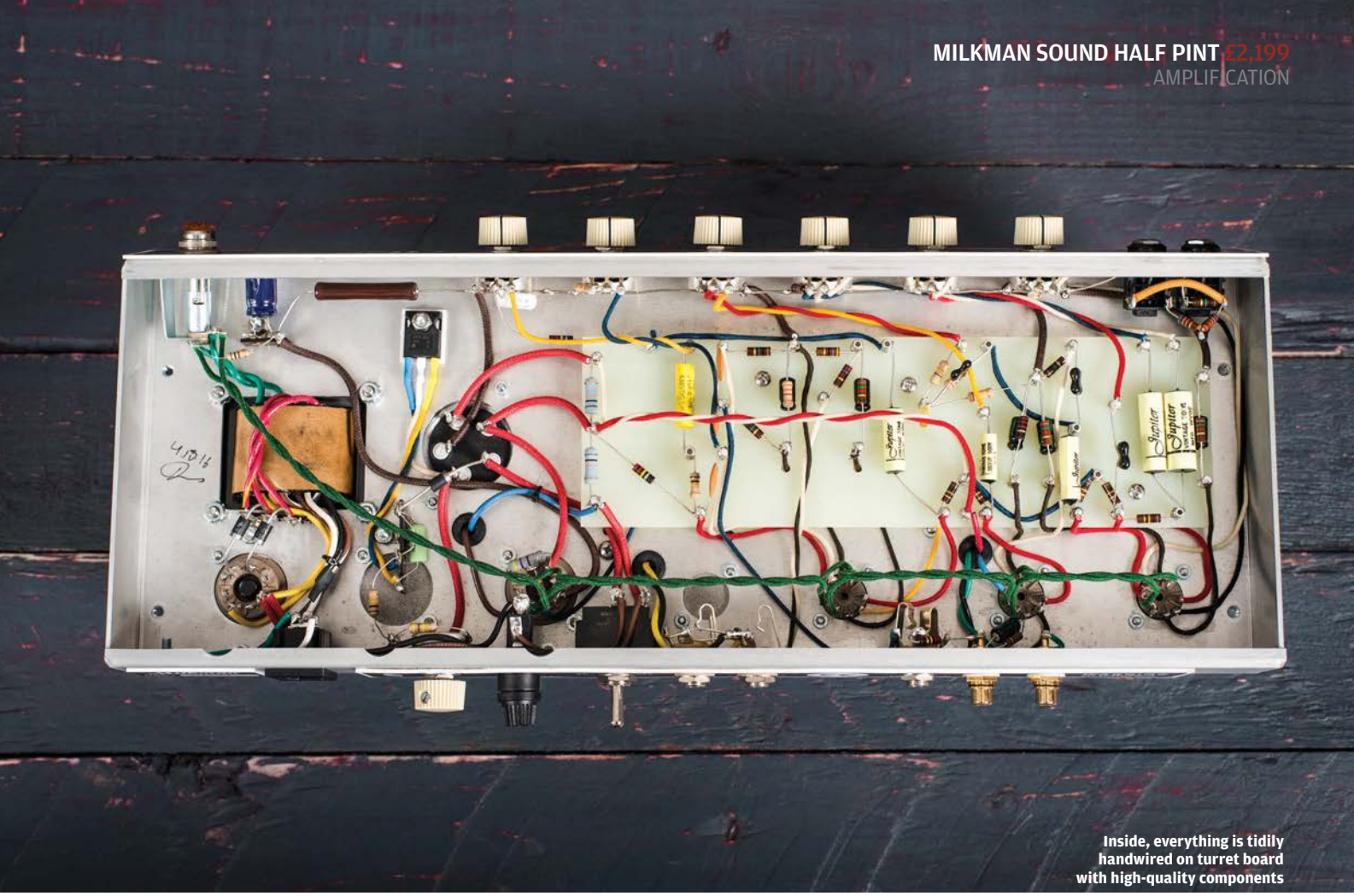
This is a valve-rectified, cathode-biased, single-ended four-watt amp that's handwired on turret board with Jupiter capacitors and Mercury Magnetic transformers. A solitary 6V6 power valve drives a 12-inch ceramic Jupiter speaker and everything is housed in a solid pine cabinet. Fortunately, this is no mere copy and the back panel has a socket for an extension speaker and effects footswitching. Best of all, the VVR control provides voltage-controlled power scaling to address yet another Vibrochamp issue – for home use, they can actually be a bit too loud.

At no point does the Milkman Half Pint sound like a small amp, and it could be superb in the studio

In use

Comparing our 1984 Fender Vibro-Champ and the Milkman through the same Jupiter speaker and cabinet, the Fender sounds a bit more open and chimey, but it's also grittier. The Milkman has a sweeter tone with a more compressed response that really suits single coils, and the midrange scoop is far less apparent. The Milkman's tone controls also have a wider range and the Jupiter is a better match for both amps because, compared to a 10-inch alnico, it allows you to wind up the treble for shimmery cleans and dial it back to sweeten the edge of overdrive.

There's a surprising amount of clean headroom: using a Telecaster, overdrive comes in gradually from about 6.5 on the volume control. The tremolo has a wide range and a wonderful feel that remains playable even at the highest depth settings. If you're a spring reverb fan, you're in for a treat because the Milkman's reverb is unusually



Inside, everything is tidily handwired on turret board with high-quality components

controllable and goes from a barely perceptible shimmer to surf city. The overdrive charcteristic is more raucous honk than creamy sustain, but with a touch of reverb and trem it's evocative stuff for lo-fi blues and garagey grind. You can also dial back the bass and treble to emphasise the mids for a touch more tweediness that works brilliantly with both P-90s and PAFs.

We have mixed feelings about the onboard power scaling as a ragged grittiness becomes apparent when the volume control goes above eight with the power reduction at maximum. It's a more effective and practical feature when you don't push the amp or the power scaling too hard, and the tone controls compensate for any changes in frequency balance perceived as a result of reduced levels.

At no point does the Half Pint sound like a small amp, and with its barely perceptible noise floor it could be superb in the studio. If the goal was to achieve a more versatile, practical and open-sounding take on the Vibro-Champ, it's very much mission accomplished.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

The **Rift Amps PR6** **£1,199** combines a Princeton preamp and single-ended multiple-choice valve power amp with reverb, trem and a G12Q speaker. Although it has no trem, the **Carr Mini-Mercury** **£1,549** has an onboard attenuator and a three-position boost switch.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Fine build quality and boutique components
+ Very impressive reverb and tremolo
+ Range of clean and overdriven tones
+ Very low noise floor
+ Onboard power scaling

- Can be ragged when maxed out
- Slightly pricey due to plunging pound

The Milkman Half Pint is an impressive variation on the blackface Vibro-Champ theme, with extra features and studio-friendly performance

8/10

Seagull Artist Mosaic CW Folk Element & S6 Original CH

Canadian builder Seagull has undergone a rebrand. Will the new look be reflected in its guitars? **HUW PRICE** checks out two...

Like Norman and Simon & Patrick, Seagull Guitars is a Canadian brand that is part of the Godin family. Founded by Robert Godin in the village of LaPatrie in Quebec back in 1982, Godin's son Simon has recently overseen a rebrand designed to update and re-introduce Seagull to the guitar-playing world. Today, LaPatrie has a population of just 475, of which roughly half are guitar builders. Still calling the small village home, Seagull is committed to sustainability, affordability and using locally-sourced materials. While the rebranding exercise includes a new logo and website, you should also look out for a new range of body shapes and colours, notably the gorgeous Burnt Umber sunburst. The underlying theme is that there's a Seagull model for every budget, lifestyle and image.

Seagull S6 Original CH

While maple is widely acknowledged as a premium tonewood, if you've ever been to Canada you'll know they have an abundance of the stuff. Cherry isn't exactly in short supply either, all of which goes some way to explaining the cherry and maple veneer back and sides, and the three-piece maple neck used here on this non-cutaway acoustic.

The neck has a translucent satin-brown finish and the headstock front is painted black. Around the outer edge, the finish has been scraped back to create a faux binding effect. The rosewood fingerboard is unbound, but the body is treated to chocolate plastic binding on the front and back. The solid cedar top has a deep and mellow colour with tight and straight grain, and a quality piece of rosewood has been used for the bridge. Tiny trademarks on the nut and compensated saddle reveal that they are made from Tusq. Other appointments include cream plastic bridge pins and chrome Seagull-branded die-cast tuners. There is a herringbone rosette, but that's as close as this Seagull gets to bling.

The CH doesn't have to be played hard to bring it to life. It can sound mellow and harp-like or strong and driving

In use

The S6's tone is immediately likeable. It's big, bright, clear and extremely well defined. The zingy extended treble of a fresh spruce top isn't here, but instead the focus shifts to a full and woody midrange and a deep but solid bass that keeps its composure down to drop C and beyond.

This is the type of acoustic guitar that doesn't have to be played hard to bring it to life. It can sound mellow and harp-like when picked gently or strong and driving when strummed.

All things considered, this is a very decent all-round acoustic with a slightly more forgiving tone than many other spruce-topped instruments of a similar size. The tone can become a bit crashy and >

The CW sports an elegant 12th-fret inlay on its rosewood 'board

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE... Seagull Artist Mosaic CW Folk Element

Solid cedar-topped alternatives include the acoustic-only **Takamine GN20-NA £247** and the electro-acoustic **LAG Tramontane T100ACE £395**, both with laminated mahogany back and sides. The **Cort GA5F Grand Auditorium £340** has a laminated blackwood back and sides, plus a Fishman Presys pickup system.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE... Seagull S6 Original CH

The **Furch G-20-CM £811** is a cutaway acoustic with a solid cedar top and solid-mahogany back and sides but no pickup system. The **Stanford SW 48 GA CM ECW Sidewalk £741** is another acoustic-only cutaway with a solid cedar/mahogany body and bone nut and saddle

compressed when the CH is pushed to its limit.

Seagull Artist Mosaic CW Folk Element

Although this model was introduced some time ago, the review guitar sports the new logo on the headstock, and we would certainly agree its looped cursive is an improvement on the old logo's spidery script. More importantly, we shouldn't overlook the new onboard electronics.

The Artist Mosaic CW now comes loaded with an LR Baggs Element pickup system, and the controls are straightforward, with volume and tone trims tucked under the soundhole. The Element's preamp is mounted in a tubular housing that bolts through the tail block with a cleverly integrated strap button and jack-socket design. Less obvious is the low-frequency compressor circuit that's designed to tame bass thump and more closely align the plugged and unplugged dynamics.

It's hard to find fault with the build quality or tone at its price point, and the tuning is very stable

The cutaway flows nicely into the elegantly soft waist of the body, and the all-solid construction features a mahogany back and sides with a cedar top. As on the S6, the mahogany neck is a three-piece construction with a bound ebony fingerboard that matches the bridge. The rosewood peghead overlay looks natural, and it's the only area with a gloss finish – a semi-gloss finish protects the rest of the guitar. The headstock inlay has an intriguingly three-dimensional look and the cream binding matches the buttons on the gold-plated machineheads. The bridge pins also appear classier than those on the S6.

In use

Acoustically, the CW did not hook us as quickly as the S6, but within a very short space of time we realised this was a big step up in both refinement and dynamics. Although the long sustain and treble response are somewhat similar, the tone has less upper-midrange push, and therefore a more balanced and gentler quality.

The lower-mids and bass also sound fuller, but without the hyped harmonic overtones the attack is less snappy and crisp. You may sense a reduction in sheer volume as a result, but the CW is noticeably easier to play because nothing jumps out at you and there's no 'crashiness'. It's not the most harmonically rich and complex of acoustics, but the plain strings have an appealingly rounded suppleness and we sense that this would be a very easy guitar to record.

The pickup system may be low on features, but output is high, it's noise-free and the core tone is more than usable from the get-go. With the tone control set in its centre indent, the sound is slightly brighter through flat-response monitoring than the CW's unplugged tone, but a very slight EQ tweak will bring the treble into line.

Like many piezo systems, the dynamics don't feel completely natural, but a touch more compression would help smooth out the tendency towards low-midrange bloom. As an all-solid guitar, the CW inevitably has its pre-feedback volume limit, but as electro-acoustic tones go, it's pretty good and certainly enjoyable to play.

All the Seagulls we have reviewed have had a fairly distinctive feel and vibe, and these two are no exception. A big part of that feel comes from the neck profile, which combines a wider than average, hand-filling C shape with a square-shouldered transition to the square-sided fingerboard. Everybody has different preferences and some may find the shoulder a bit utilitarian, but the wider string spacing suits strumming and fingerstyle picking alike.

The S6 won't win any beauty contests, but it's hard to find fault with the build quality or tone at its price point, and the tuning is very stable. Even so, the CW provides a big step up in looks, tone and features. The herringbone decoration and pearl fingerboard inlays add value and it's a very appealing guitar.

The new Seagull logo, flanked by the CW's gold-plated die-cast tuners

KEY FEATURES

Seagull Artist Mosaic CW Folk Element

- **PRICE** £1,099
- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid electro-acoustic six-string guitar, made in Canada
- **BUILD** Solid cedar top, solid mahogany back and sides, cream body and headstock binding, mahogany neck, ebony bridge, bound ebony fingerboard, rosewood peghead overlay, 14th-fret neck join, Tusq nut and compensated saddle, herringbone purfling and rosette
- **HARDWARE** Gold-plated die-cast tuners with cream plastic buttons
- **ELECTRICS** LR Baggs Element Active System-VTC
- **SCALE LENGTH** 631mm/24.84"
- **NECK WIDTH** 45mm at nut, 55mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 19mm at first fret, 24mm at ninth fret
- **STRING SPACING** 38mm at nut, 54mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 1.8kg/3.9lbs
- **FINISH** Semi-gloss
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **CONTACT** 440 Distribution 01132 589599 **www.seagullguitars.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ High build quality and good looks
+ Refined acoustic tone
+ Good pickup system

– Tricky battery compartment access
– Unusual neck profile

Possibly the most upmarket, stylish and toneful Seagull guitar we have tried so far

8/10

KEY FEATURES

Seagull S6 Original CH

- **PRICE** £399
- **DESCRIPTION** Six-string acoustic guitar, made in Canada
- **BUILD** Solid cedar top, laminated cherry back and sides, brown plastic body binding, mahogany neck, rosewood bridge, rosewood fingerboard, 14th-fret neck join, Tusq nut and compensated saddle, herringbone rosette
- **HARDWARE** Chrome die-cast tuners
- **ELECTRICS** N/A
- **SCALE LENGTH** 648mm/25.5"
- **NECK WIDTH** 44.5mm at nut, 54mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 19mm at first fret, 23mm at ninth fret
- **STRING SPACING** 38.5mm at nut, 53.5mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 1.9kg/4.1lbs
- **FINISH** Semi-gloss
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Decent build quality
+ Lively acoustic tone
+ Classic shape

– Unusual neck profile
– Crashy sound when pushed

A lot of very usable tones and solid construction at an affordable price make this an attractive choice

8/10

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Faith Nomad Mini-Saturn & Mini Neptune Electros

The Saturn and Neptune have been downsized for the Nomad series. **HUW PRICE** subjects two dwarf planets to a test of Faith...

Over the years, we have come to associate Faith with well-made, all solid-wood acoustics that offer little in the way of decorative flourishes but deliver great value in tone and playability. The pair on test here might be described as 'small but perfectly formed'. Both feature all solid-wood construction, which is clear to see due to the complete absence of body binding.

The scale length is reduced to 590mm and the necks join at the 12th fret, which ensures that the rosewood bridges end up pretty much plum centre of the lower bout. If you want to fill out the sound of a small-bodied acoustic, it's a good place to be.

There are onboard electronics, too, which may strike you as a curious feature on a 'travel' guitar, but the concept has worked pretty well for Ed Sheeran. Faith's proprietary CnR3 preamp and pickup system is very well featured, with three-band equalisation, polarity switching, a volume control and a built-in tuner with a commendably clear display.

The system is powered by a nine-volt battery that's housed in a compartment, along with the output jack, on the lower bout. The pickup is a piezo located beneath the compensated NuBone saddle, and every Nomad guitar comes with a nicely made gigbag featuring a generously proportioned, zipped storage pouch.

Other common features include an abalone rosette, black-bound Indonesian rosewood fingerboards, medium frets, Macassan ebony bridges, ebony bridge pins with abalone dots and quarter-sawn spruce bracing.

The set necks are mahogany with a stacked heel and the headstock scarf jointed under the second and third frets. Both the peghead overlays and truss-rod covers are rosewood and the tuners are die-cast Grover look-alikes.

The Mini-Saturn is balanced nicely acoustically. It's a very effective all-rounder for strumming and picking

Nomad Mini-Saturn Electro

This bijou dreadnought features a spruce top with wide but straight grain that looks pale beneath the open-pore satin finish. The upper and lower bouts measure 25cm and 34.5cm respectively and the body is 44cm long and 9.2cm at its deepest. The Mini-Saturn is 905mm long.

In use

The Mini-Saturn is surprisingly loud and nicely balanced acoustically. It doesn't really sound like a mini dreadnought because there's no bass-end thump, the treble is sweet rather than incisive and the mids are full and forward. Unlike many small-bodied guitars, the tone isn't dominated by midrange boxiness and it's a very effective all-rounder for strumming and picking duties alike.

Nomad Mini-Neptune Electro

Measuring 26mm and 35.5mm respectively at the upper and lower bout, I doubt that there's much difference in the internal volume of the Mini-Neptune and Mini-Saturn. The body lengths and depths are identical, although this time we have a more rounded shape and the timber is solid mahogany. In all other regards, these guitars are identical.

In use

If you're looking for a unique voicing with bags of character, the Mini-Neptune would be a better bet than the Mini-Saturn. However, the tonal characteristic is so distinct it won't be to everybody's taste. There is a brash and bluesy boxiness courtesy of a strong resonance in the upper-mids. It sounds almost unlike a guitar and more like some sort of medium-sized 'folk instrument' – especially when >

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Nomad Mini-Saturn Electro

The **Freshman SONGTRAVNAT** **£399** has a solid spruce top, solid mahogany back and sides and a pickup. **Sigma**'s **TM-12** **£239** features a solid sitka spruce top with mahogany back and sides but no pickup system.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Nomad Mini-Neptune Electro

Taylor's mini dreadnought **BT2E** **£421** has a solid mahogany top with laminated sapele back and sides, and an ES-B preamp with a built-in tuner. The **LXK2 Little Martin** **£379** is made from high-pressure laminate koa and has no pickup.

you strum close to the bridge. Like the Mini-Saturn, it has impressive clarity and it's dynamically responsive in the extreme. In fact, both these guitars are tremendous fun – but there are a couple of issues, too. Put a capo on the first fret and these guitars play pretty well, but out of the box the nut slots are cut too high for them to sound in tune when playing open chords. Rather sloppy tuners don't help much either.

fundamentally bright instruments. I suspect a set of phosphor bronze or monel alloy strings would provide more refinement and complexity, and it's a potential upgrade you can make yourself for less than a tenner.

There is clearly a current enthusiasm for small-bodied acoustic guitars, and the concessions we are obliged to make due to the reduced internal volume and soundboard surface area are well understood.

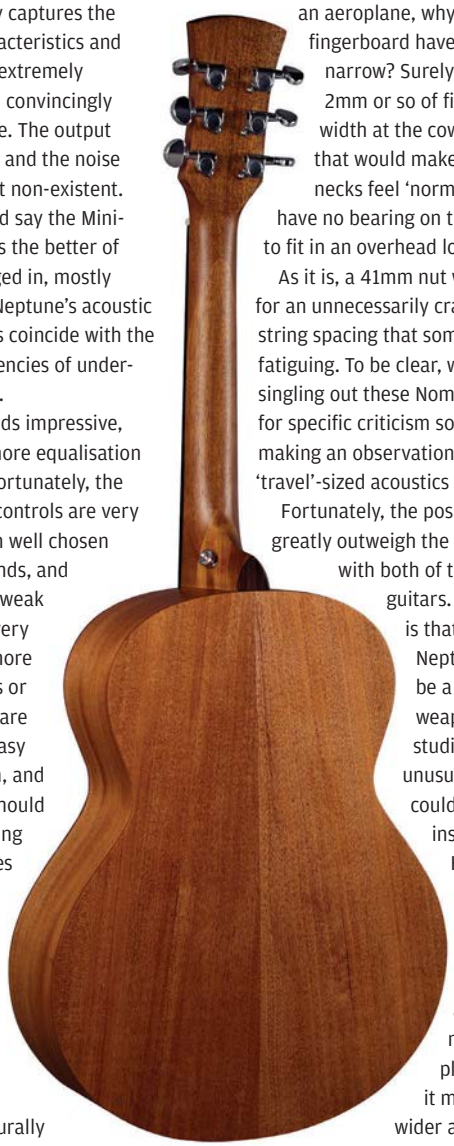
The pickup system is a triumph. It sends out an extremely palatable and convincingly 'acoustic' tone

On our review models, all fretted notes below the seventh fret sound sharp. However, there's nothing fundamentally wrong with either of these guitars that a thorough post-purchase setup wouldn't remedy.

The pickup system is a triumph. It successfully captures the acoustic characteristics and sends out an extremely palatable and convincingly 'acoustic' tone. The output is very strong and the noise level is almost non-existent. On balance, I'd say the Mini-Saturn sounds the better of the two plugged in, mostly because the Neptune's acoustic idiosyncrasies coincide with the 'quack' frequencies of under-saddle piezos.

It still sounds impressive, but a touch more equalisation is required. Fortunately, the equalisation controls are very effective, with well chosen frequency bands, and allow you to tweak the tone in every direction. If more powerful bass or tamed treble are needed, it's easy to accomplish, and there really should be a law making phase switches compulsory.

The bland brightness of coated 80/20 bronze strings does little for the timbre of naturally



So, yes, they're small but there's no reason for them to feel like 'toy-style' instruments, yet all too many do. Sadly, these Nomads bear some of those hallmarks.

Here's the thing. If the imperative is to reduce the overall length so you can carry one of these guitars onto an aeroplane, why does the fingerboard have to be so narrow? Surely the extra 2mm or so of fingerboard width at the cowboy end that would make these necks feel 'normal' would have no bearing on their ability to fit in an overhead locker.

As it is, a 41mm nut width makes for an unnecessarily cramped string spacing that some may find fatiguing. To be clear, we're not singling out these Nomad models for specific criticism so much as making an observation about 'travel'-sized acoustics in general.

Fortunately, the positives greatly outweigh the negatives with both of these guitars. My feeling is that the Neptune could be a real 'secret weapon' in the studio, and its unusual voicing could prove inspiring.

However, the Saturn is better behaved acoustically and sounds nicer plugged in, so it may have a wider appeal.

KEY FEATURES

Nomad Mini-Saturn Electro

- **PRICE** £459
- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid electro-acoustic six-string travel guitar, made in Indonesia
- **BUILD** Solid spruce top, solid mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck, Macassan figured ebony bridge, rosewood fingerboard, rosewood peghead overlay and truss-rod cover, 12th-fret neck join, chrome die-cast tuners, NuBone nut and saddle, ebony bridge pins with abalone dots and abalone rosette
- **ELECTRICS** Faith CnR-3 System
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISH** Clear satin
- **SCALE LENGTH** 59mm/23.22"
- **NECK WIDTH** 41.4mm at nut, 54mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 19mm at first fret, 23mm at seventh fret
- **STRING SPACING** 34.5mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 1.7kg/3.7lbs
- **CONTACT** Barnes & Mullins Ltd 01691 652449 **www.faithguitars.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Bright, loud and balanced
+ All-solid woods
+ Excellent pickup system
+ Onboard tuner

– Poor nut work
– Review model needed setting up
– Sloppy tuners

More of a dreadnought in looks than sound, the Mini-Saturn is a credible guitar that sounds great plugged in

7/10

KEY FEATURES

Nomad Mini-Neptune Electro

- **PRICE** £459
- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid electro-acoustic six-string travel guitar, made in Indonesia
- **BUILD** Solid mahogany top, back and sides, mahogany neck, Macassan figured ebony bridge, rosewood fingerboard, rosewood peghead overlay and trussrod cover, 12th-fret neck join, chrome die-cast tuners, NuBone nut and saddle, ebony bridge pins with abalone dots and abalone rosette
- **ELECTRICS** Faith CnR-3 System
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- **NECK DEPTH** 19mm at first fret, 23mm at seventh fret
- **STRING SPACING** 34.5mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 1.75kg/3.7lbs

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Bright, loud tonality
+ Attractive woods
+ Shares the Saturn's pickup system
+ Also benefits from tuner

– Same nut problem
– Same setup and tuner issues
– Strong upper-mid resonance

A slightly odd but intriguing tone, coupled with good looks and impressive dynamics

7/10

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Caroline Kilobyte & Haymaker

Intriguing names and graphics, and mysterious extra switches... **RICHARD PURVIS** gets his head around a pair of American originals

We're looking at a green overdrive that doesn't want to sound like a Tube Screamer, and a lo-fi delay that doesn't want to sound analogue. Caroline makes all the right noises about courage, innovation and 'daring to dream' – we'll soon find out if the pedals make all the right noises, too, but they certainly don't look like cautious copycats.

Founded in 2010, this small-scale US firm bankrolled its early projects – including the first version of the Kilobyte delay, launched in 2013 – through Kickstarter crowdfunding. The product roster has since expanded to seven stompboxes, and they're still made in Columbia, South Carolina.

Kilobyte

Digital delays have been trying very hard to emulate the scuzzy, warbly decay of their analogue ancestors for a long time now – and some of them are really, really good at it. But lo-fi doesn't have to mean analogue – and the Kilobyte proves it. This box lets your dry signal pass through unmolested, but creates its repeats by ramming a powerful overdrive preamp into a cheap digital delay chip designed for toys and karaoke machines.

So, you have controls for level, feedback and delay time, but also – the top right one with the space invader icon – attack, for setting the gain of the preamp that drives the repeats. There's also a second footswitch, known aptly enough as 'havoc' – hold this down to temporarily max out the feedback setting for runaway self-oscillation.

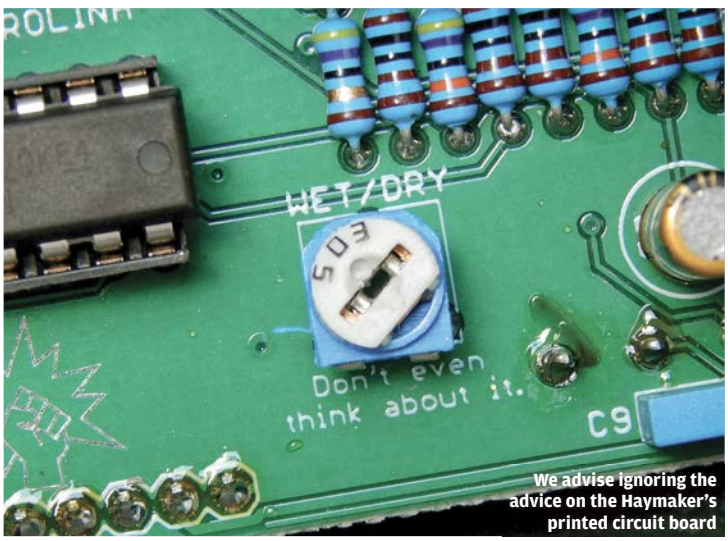
Finally, the little trimpot in the middle controls the modulation depth of the repeats. The original Kilobyte had this pot hidden on the inside, and believe it. This is only a wee stompbox, after all – and a lo-fi one at that.

In use

The manual includes some suggested settings, and that's just as well because it can take a while to feel at home with

The Kilobyte creates its repeats by ramming a powerful overdrive preamp into a cheap digital delay chip

that brings us to a more fundamental change: unlike the handwired 2013 version, this pedal is built around a printed circuit board. Caroline reckons there's no audible difference, and based on past experience we're inclined to the idiosyncratic labelling of these controls. Probably the best approach is to start with the attack and modulation at zero, then tweak the other three controls just as you would on a normal delay. It's not exactly scuzzy like this >



We advise ignoring the advice on the Haymaker's printed circuit board

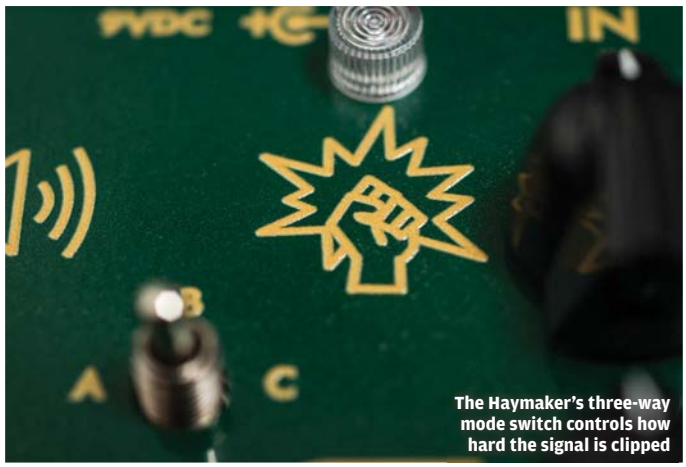
LIKE THIS? TRY THESE... Kilobyte

Other options for digital delay with analogue scruffiness include the **Strymon El Capistan £299** and the tiny but hugely fun **Mooer Ana Echo £42**. Everyone's favourite modulated analogue delay, the **Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man £199**, is still going strong – and the smaller Memory Boy and Memory Toy variants sound great for the money.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE... Haymaker

The **Way Huge Green Rhino £129** takes the Tube Screamer template and adds bags of tonal versatility, while the excellent **Cusack Screamer Fuzz £149** combines low-gain crunch and all-out filth in one compact box. It's not easy to get hold of a **Paul Cochrane Timmy** these days, but used ones do sometimes show up for **£150-£200**.

This innocent-looking switch creates glorious self-oscillating mayhem



The Haymaker's three-way mode switch controls how hard the signal is clipped

– there's just a touch of treble roll-off helping the repeats to blend in naturally. The maximum delay time is not far short of a full second.

Dialling in just a smidgeon of modulation brings some welcome sweetness to clean chords, and we're now starting to feel very comfortable with this warm, soothing delay. But then, creeping up to tip us off the sofa in a disorientated heap, comes that little space invader. With this knob past halfway, the dry signal is still unaffected but the repeats are properly ratty – and also a lot louder, so you'll have to pull the level control right back to compensate.

We're promised a wider gain range than most pedals of this type, from transparent crunch to blistering fuzz

You can use the feedback and delay time controls to create soaring and swooping self-oscillation patterns, but it's a real bonus to have the havoc switch at your disposal here. The repeats get more and more gnarly as they build – middly overtones barging their way to the front in a joyously unpredictable way – and then drop gently away again as soon as you take your foot off. You can even ride this switch through chord progressions like an accelerator, letting the noisy ambience build then lifting off just long enough to get round the corners.

Haymaker

What kind of overdrive is the Haymaker? The website blurb mentions three widely acknowledged classics – the Centaur, the Timmy and the Tube Screamer – but makes it clear that, in keeping with Caroline's fearless ethos, those reference points were always targets to beat, not to emulate. What, all of them? Well, you might as well aim high. We're promised a wider gain range than most pedals of this type, from transparent crunch right through to blistering fuzz.

That's not why it's called a 'dynamic drive', though. That's down to the three-way mode switch in the middle, which adjusts how hard the signal is clipped, and therefore how squished it sounds. Might this be inspired by the symmetry switch on the Timmy? As with the Kilobyte, we get three other controls whose functions are straightforward once you've deciphered the graphics (volume, gain and tone), and one that's a bit of an enigma. This bottom-right knob is called shape, and the best way to explain what it does might just be to describe what it sounds like...

However, first there's one more control to mention: an internal trimpot for wet/dry balance, which – according to the manual, and even a cheeky message on the circuit board itself – we shouldn't go anywhere near. Ha, right. We'll have a good old fiddle with this in due course.

In use

The middle switch setting is supposed to offer the most open, uncompressed sound, and that's where we'll start. With the gain just shy of halfway and the shape control at zero for now, we get a full, crisp low-gain overdrive that's about as transparent as they come. It's basically your bypass signal, but bigger and hairier – a fine starting point for any overdrive. Things do get a lot more rocky when we start piling on the overdrive, but it stays effortlessly smooth and tonally neutral all the way round to the top.

Flick the mode switch from B to A and you might be tempted to flick it straight back again – it's a step back in 'bigness', with the midrange flattened out for a more fizzily saturated drive. Mode C is more compressed again, but it is worth persevering because – with a little tweaking – these extra voices are great for softer-edged lead work. And the shape control? It sort of brings the whole thing to life – that is, even more life than it had already. Turning it up adds richness to the overdrive and sparkle to the top in a way that's subtle but hugely useful.

Finally, as nobody's looking, we'll give that little trimpot a twist to blend some clean signal back into the overdriven sound. Can it really be so dangerous? Nah. As long as you don't go too far, it sounds bloody great. And that, children, is why you should never do as you're told.

KEY FEATURES

Caroline Kilobyte

- **PRICE** £199
- **DESCRIPTION** Digital delay pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Level, attack (delay gain), summation (feedback), binary clock (delay time), trimpot for modulation depth; bypass footswitch, havoc hold footswitch for self-oscillation
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 122mm(d)x91mm(w) x49mm (h)
- **CONTACT** Audio Distribution Group 0045 6574 8228 (Denmark) **carolineguitar.com, audiodistributiongroup.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Sweet medium-fi sounds with the gain control set low...
+ ...and powerful lo-fi sounds with it cranked
+ Havoc footswitch is a real bonus for the sonically fearless
– For some, a budget analogue delay will do just as well

It's a boutique pedal that's meant to sound like a cheap one, but the build quality and extra functionality justify the price – one for creative players

8/10

KEY FEATURES

Caroline Haymaker

- **PRICE** £199
- **DESCRIPTION** Ovedrive pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Volume, punch, highs, shape, three-way mode switch; bypass footswitch; internal trimpot for wet/dry blend
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v battery or DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 122mm(d)x91mm(w) x49mm(h)

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Superbly natural, amp-like overdrive
+ Mode switch and shape control really open up your tonal options
+ Sounds best at low-ish gain but knows how to rock out, too
– There's an awful lot of competition at (and below) this price point

An instantly likeable, magically transparent overdrive with a wide gain range and some nifty tricks for sonic tinkerers – this thing has real class

9/10

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Walrus Audio pedals

These four units from Oklahoma stompbox maverick Walrus Audio cover a lot of sonic ground... but **RICHARD PURVIS** is up to the tusk

You may remember John Lennon claiming to be a walrus. He wasn't really, but he'd surely have loved the crazy artwork (not to mention the cute tusky logo) on these US-made pedals. Who else gives you underground skeletons and post-apocalyptic cavalrymen? It's what's inside that we're most interested in, though – and between a dual phaser, a reverb with octaving, a low-gain overdrive and a versatile fuzz, we've a lot to talk about. The larger units are made for tweakers, with eight knobs each plus three-way mode switching and editable presets; but be warned, the other two aren't necessarily as simple as they look...

KEY FEATURES

Vanguard

- **PRICE** £249
- **DESCRIPTION** Stereo dual phaser pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Dry mix; phaser 1 rate, depth, regeneration; phaser 2 rate, depth, tweak; wet mix; mode switch: 10-stage + regeneration, 4-stage + pitch, 6-stage + filter
- **FEATURES** Three editable presets; mono/stereo outputs, expression pedal input, remote footswitch input; true bypass, switchable for trails; powered by 9v DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 141mm(w) x121mm(d)x56mm(h)
- **CONTACT** 0032 3844 6797 **www.walrusaudio.com**

Guitar & Bass AWARD CHOICE 9/10

If you think the only thing better than a phaser is two phasers, prepare to be intrigued by the Vanguard. It has two phase circuits running in series, and the separate controls mean you can have them swishing and swooping around each other in strange and unpredictable ways. The three-way mode switch affects both circuits; this, plus controls for 'regen' (feedback intensity) and 'tweak' (various functions according to mode), make the Vanguard about the most fine-tunable phaser you can get.

It's a digital effect, and the sounds do tend towards the metallic and flangey, but it's easy to find straight modulation effects as well as the trippy layered stuff. The left footswitch allows you to recall and store presets, and here's a trick they didn't put in the manual: hold down the right switch while powering up and it'll switch from true bypass to buffered... with trails. It doesn't sound totally natural, and it may not even be super-useful to have the phasey swirls dying out slowly, but it's fun to try.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Deep and freaky dual-phaser madness
+ Can do subtle chorus-like effects, too
+ Gives you total control over just about every variable

– It can get pretty unmusical

Not everyone will need two phasers in one box, but there's plenty of sonic strangeness to explore here

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Voyager

- **PRICE** £189
- **DESCRIPTION** Preamp/ overdrive pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Volume, tone, gain; bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v battery or DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 120mm(d) x65mm(w)x56mm(h)

Here's a dramatically evocative name for what is just a three-knob gritbox. There are no toggle switches or extra modes, just the same basic controls you'll find on a classic Tube Screamer – and while the Voyager's enclosure is more mint green than the lurid lime of many TS types, it's close enough that most people will be expecting one thing: low-gain overdrive with a bit of a midrange hump. Well, that's what we get... but there's more to Walrus's contribution to the genre than that.

Starting with the gain at zero and the other two dials at noon, we hear a subtle clean boost with no audible colouration. Crank the level and we get enough added kick to really push an amp's front end, while turning up the tone control turns the Voyager into a thoroughly musical treble booster. When we get round to dialling in some overdrive, it's essentially Screamer-like in character, but less transparent – there's more solidity in the lower-mids to match the snarl being added higher up.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Sweet and meaty low-gain overdrive
+ Sounds surprisingly pure when set for clean boost
+ Tone control adds real flexibility

– Not as glassy as a Tube Screamer

Convinces as an overdrive, as a clean booster and as a treble booster – a deceptively versatile stompbox

8/10

KEY FEATURES

Descent

- **PRICE** £289
- **DESCRIPTION** Stereo reverb pedal with octaving, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Dry mix, reverb time, diminish, tweak, wet mix, dry signal (input level), octave down level, octave up level; mode switch: hall, reverse, shimmer
- **FEATURES** Three editable presets; mono/stereo outputs, expression pedal input, remote footswitch input; true bypass, switchable for trails; powered by 9v DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 141mm(w) x121mm(d)x56mm(h)

The illustration on this pedal shows two futuristic potholers discovering a corpse, which is awfully charming but also apt, sort of, because this box is all about otherworldly depth. It's a reverb with three modes – hall, reverse and shimmer – and the appetising array of controls allows you to create a space as huge as you want.

The diminish and tweak knobs are the real bonus, affecting the pattern of decay in different ways according to the mode. Dial in up/down octaves to taste, and there's no limit to the eerie cavernous sounds – especially in stereo. The quality is impressively hi-fi and you can switch between true bypass and trails – a useful feature. The presets are a solid starting point for space explorations, although hall and shimmer are quite similar and we struggled to get anything musical out of the reverse mode. Maybe something with deeper modulation would have been better – three reverbs isn't many by today's standards, so you need to make them all count...

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Sounds convincingly huge
+ Controls enable you to sculpt your reverb with rare precision
+ Octaves add a spooky dimension

– Rivals offer more sounds per pound

If you want a reverb pedal with as much fine control as a studio plug-in, this is definitely worth a look

7/10

KEY FEATURES

Jupiter

- **PRICE** £179
- **DESCRIPTION** Fuzz pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Level, tone, fuzz; three-way mode switch, bass boost on/off; bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v battery or DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 120mm(d) x65mm(w)x56mm(h)

Guitar & Bass AWARD CHOICE 9/10

There seems to be a bit of a fuzz revival going on, and the thunderbolt-wielding deity on the front of this unit makes its fierce intentions clear. The controls for level, tone and fuzz need no explanation, but the two little toggle switches do: the one on the right allows you to engage a bass boost, while the one on the left flips between three different clipping diode arrangements – thus Walrus's description of this pedal as a 'multi-clip' fuzz.

The gods are telling us to start with the mode switch to the right, and we're not complaining because the result is magnificent. It's fabulously rich and smooth fuzz that places us broadly in Big Muff territory, but with more natural warmth and no worries about controlling 'nasal' tendencies. There's a surprising leap in output level when you switch to the middle setting; it's more assertive in the mids but still easy to love. The third mode is somewhere between the two, and the bass switch is a clever idea executed well.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Fuzz doesn't get smoother than this
+ The three modes are all different – and all good
+ Switchable bass boost is a handy extra

– Mismatched levels between modes

Three different fuzz tones, all of them addictively sweet – the standout unit of an impressive bunch

9/10

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width: 26.4 cm
depth: 29 cm

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Hot Rod Pickups T90

We all love Telecaster twang and we all love P-90 grunt. **RICHARD PURVIS** finds out if you can get both from one pickup

Do an online image search for 'Hot Rod Pickups' and you'll see lots of low-slung American trucks that look distinctly unsuitable for the school run. Find the British company of the same name, however, and you'll be rewarded with some very tasty-looking guitar hardware. These relative newcomers to the aftermarket pickup scene come from the same stable as Eternal Guitars (whose tastefully-aged instruments previously earned a *G&B* Choice Award) and they come in aged or non-aged finishes.

Hot Rod does vintage-voiced versions of all the classics, but the T90s on test here are something a little different. They're souped-up Telecaster pickups that, as you may have worked out already from the name, take us in the direction of Gibson P-90s. And don't worry – if you want to have your twangy cake and eat it, we're assured that backing off the guitar's volume will pull them right back into pure Tele territory.

Appearance-wise, there's little to tell these apart from stock Fender units. The bridge pickup has a vintage-correct copper-plated steel baseplate and white string around the coil; it looks like the sort of stuff you'd use to hang up party balloons, but it's no less smart for that. Alnico V magnets are used in both bridge and neck, and the stated DC resistance ratings are 13.5k and 11k respectively. Our bridge unit gives a reading of just under 13k, but that's still enough to suggest we might be in for a bit of an ear slapping.

In use

We're testing these pickups in a non-vintage American Standard Tele, and the stock pickups are bright and breezy with loads of clucky twinkle in the middle position. It's good stuff, and we're asking the T90s to match that as well as offering something more meaty at full output.

We start somewhere around three-quarters volume. On first play, we're missing a sliver of brightness, but what we get instead is a sweeter, stickier midrange that makes the Fender units sound ever so slightly cold in comparison. Clean tones in the neck position are less open and flutey, but overall the Hot Rods offer a more likeable set of sounds. Output at these backed-off settings is pretty low, which may have implications for your signal-to-noise ratio.

Of course, that low output is fixed easily – and the difference brought by a little turn of the knurled knob is dramatic. We'll say goodbye to the twangy freshness of the classic Tele voice here, but the hike up in power does not rob the sound of all its character. In all three positions, it's still more like a Telecaster than anything else, in fact, but fuller and more insistent in the mids – just as you might expect from P-90s. The bridge pup in particular is a wall-shaking blast, but remember we're still dealing with Fender tonewoods and scale length – and these hot single coils have pepped things up, but by no means flattened them out. There's more bite than you'll get from P-90s in a Gibson, and you might want to tweak your amp settings accordingly.

It's more like a Telecaster than anything else, but fuller and more insistent in the mids – as you might expect from P-90s

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Powerful yet articulate tones at full volume
+ Proper Tele cluck and twang when backed off
+ It's an invisible, easily reversible mod
- Pickups alone are never going to turn a Fender into a Gibson
- The pure Tele sound is quite low-output

A tidy way to add power and versatility to a Telecaster without sacrificing its vintage voice

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Hot Rod Pickups T90

- **PRICE** £59 each, £110 set, aged finish £10 extra per pickup
- **DESCRIPTION** Single-coil Telecaster pickups, made in UK
- **SPEC** Alnico V magnets, 43 AWG wire for bridge, 44 AWG wire for neck, Forbon flatwork, copper-plated steel baseplate for bridge, wax potted
- **CONTACT** Hot Rod Pickups 01243 778866 **www.hot-rodpickups.com**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

The **Oil City Pickups Wapping Wharf £59** is a Tele bridge pickup with a coil tap for hot/vintage switching. Fender's own upgrade options include the **Custom Shop Twisted Tele set £165**, while the **Bare Knuckle Piledriver Tele set £140** promises "high-output sledgehammer performance".

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Guitar & Bass AWARD CHOICE 9/10

Fane Acoustics Ascension N30

Looking for the tone of a vintage alnico-magnet speaker without the weight? **CHRIS VINNICOMBE** puts a British-made option to the test...

Despite its critical position as the last link of the chain before the sound from your guitar, pedals and amplifier hits your ears, few of us spend as much energy researching (okay, lusting after) speakers as we do the more glamorous, visible components of our rigs.

It's also fair to say that the majority of electric guitarists who do express a preference when it comes to speakers tend to gravitate towards a very small number of brands and plump for vintage-style units with either ceramic or alnico magnets.

We're a conservative bunch, that's for sure. In the wider world, neodymium magnets (a rare-earth permanent magnet made from an alloy of neodymium, iron and boron) have superseded alnico and ferrite/ceramic magnets in innumerable applications and appear in everything from MRI scanners to e-cigarettes. Their greater strength compared to alnico or ceramic magnets means that neodymium magnets can be smaller and lighter, and they are now commonplace in pro-audio speakers and headphones.

Neodymium magnets have been around for a while in guitar speakers, too, but the new Ascension N30 from Fane Acoustics sees the Yorkshire-based company bring its considerable heritage as a loudspeaker pioneer to bear on a product that aims to nail a vintage alnico tone in a lightweight format. As part of the brand's recent relaunch, a great deal of attention has been paid to design aesthetics, and the smart cream and metallic red N30 is no exception. Time to get the screwdriver out...

Celestion's Blue and Gold are most players' benchmarks, and in a comparison test the N30 fares very well

In use

With a depth of 120.5mm, the fit inside our Swart AST combo is a much less snug affair than the 165mm deep Celestion Gold that we've been using recently. As promised, it also shaves off a little weight, with our amp weighing in on a digital scale at 14.4kg with the Gold installed and 13.03kg with the N30. It's not an earth-shattering difference in a 1x12 combo with a pine cabinet, but if you're dragging a 4x12 up and down pub staircases every weekend then a 5-6kg reduction will be both noticeable and welcome – the difference is more than the weight of a Les Paul Custom!

Celestion's Blue and Gold are most players' benchmarks when it comes to alnico speaker tone, and in a direct comparison test, with all the drivers involved having been nicely broken in, the Ascension N30 fares very well indeed. At 99dB, the Fane is slightly less efficient than the 100dB Celestions (this may well be a good thing depending on your playing circumstances) and there's a shade less high-frequency brilliance and complexity, but it has similar overall characteristics and plenty of the appealing chime you'd associate with vintage alnico speakers.

As ever, our preferences are very guitar-dependant, but we prefer the Fane to either Celestion in combination with a crisp Telecaster bridge pickup. Switching to a Gretsch or Gibson ES-335, the N30 has a little more low-end punch than either the Gold or Blue, which is most noticeable when playing deep, single-note lines on the E and A strings. Throwing Fane's own Ascension A60 alnico speaker into the mix, the N30 has a little less woodiness in the midrange but, again, it's a close-run thing.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ 120.5mm depth will be easy to accommodate in most cabs or combos
+ Stands up well to a comparison with the competition
+ Pleasing chime and depth
- If weight is your top priority, there are lighter drivers out there

Smart looks and sounds with a vintage alnico flavour from a Brit brand with considerable heritage

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Fane Acoustics Ascension N30

- **PRICE** £179.99
- **DESCRIPTION** 12-inch neodymium magnet loudspeaker, 8/16-ohms, made in UK
- **POWER RATING** 30-watts
- **SENSITIVITY** 99dB
- **WEIGHT** 2.7kg/5.95lbs
- **CONTACT** Fane Acoustics 01924 224 618 www.fane-acoustics.com

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE

Celestion's new **Neo Creamback** is just 4.2lb/1.9kg with street prices around **£105**, but its tonality is in the ballpark of a Greenback with a sensitivity of 97dB. If weight isn't an issue, **Fane**'s own **Ascension A60 £214.99** is a great-sounding, 60-watt alternative to the Celestion Blue or Gold.

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Classic Case display cases

Guitar & Bass AWARD CHOICE 9/10

Classic Case makes bespoke guitar display cases in the UK with a wide range of customer options. **HUW PRICE** checks how it's hanging...

There's no denying that most of us enjoy looking at guitars almost as much as we enjoy playing them. We at *G&B* have never liked leaving our guitars in their cases because the strings seem to go dead quicker – and if there are celluloid parts, the off-gassing can eat into the metal and plastic parts.

They also seem to take on a musty old smell and the effort of finding the case and getting the guitar out sometimes feels like too much bother when there's another guitar available more readily. Leaving guitars on stands is fraught with danger, though, and don't even get me started on the inadvisability of leaning them up against amps. Personally, I like to hang mine on the wall so I can always look at them and reach for one any time I want to play it. There is another option that offers the grab-and-go convenience of a wall hanger with loads more style and extra protection.

Classic Case is, as far as we know, one of only two UK companies making display cases for electric guitars, acoustic guitars and basses. The cases are built from furniture-grade plywood with tongue and groove corner joints. A very wide range of tolex and tweed coverings is available for amp-themed looks, and the doors are precision-cut 5mm acrylic with polished edges, a magnetic catch and strike plate for easy opening and closing. A heavy-duty Häfele lock is offered as an optional extra, along with battery-operated LED spot and stick lights.

For the internal lining, you can choose from several types of crushed velvet fitted over a cushioned backing. The guitar hanger is a tried and tested String Swing with finish-friendly yoke padding and keeper rings. The String Swing is supported by an aluminium back brace across the rear of the case, and the case itself hangs from two heavy-duty mirror hooks.

In use

If you were putting a String Swing on a wall in the usual manner, you would need to drill two holes in your wall. Fortunately, only two holes are required for a Classic Case, too, and the mirror hooks allow it to hang almost flush with the wall.

You can tell at a glance that this is a superbly made product. The highest-quality materials are used throughout and the standard of the covering is up there with boutique amp standards. The tweed coverings are even lacquered to simulate the look of an aged but pristine vintage amp, and the brass escutcheon pins securing the metal name plate are a classy touch.

If space is at a premium and you have a lot of guitars to hang up, a Classic Case may not be the most practical solution. However, if you want to show off your pride and joy while protecting it and keeping it ready for action, this product is ideal. A Classic Case can also be used to frame a guitar to make it look like a piece of art. If you have been trying to persuade your partner to allow a guitar into your living room on a permanent basis, one of these might even seal the deal.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Stylish storage solution that's built to last
+ High finish standard
+ Wide range of options
+ Easy wall mounting

- Cheaper than other brands, but still a reasonably hefty investment

Beautifully made, customisable cases at a far lower price point than the competition

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Classic Case

- **PRICE** Standard case £325, plus £20 for Häfele lock & £35 for UK carriage. Tweed cases, with shellac and nitrocellulose, £350
- **DESCRIPTION** Hand-built guitar display case with String Swing hanger, made in the UK
- **FINISH OPTIONS** White Light, Back In Black, The Tweedy, Electric Blue, Black Tolex with Ruby Red Crushed Velvet, Black Tolex With Smokestone Crushed Velvet, Red House. Battery-operated LED stick lights and spot lights, and Häfele lock available as optional extras
- **CONTACT** Classic Case 07973 407435/01656 657067 **classiccase.co.uk**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE

There are various guitar display case manufacturers in the US, but things get prohibitively expensive by the time you've paid shipping and duty. Here in the UK, **Audinni** makes bespoke cases with veneered surfaces starting at **£699**. Acoustic players can check out Acoustic Remedy cases at **The North American Guitar**, starting from **£1,050**.

PJB Suitcase Compact BG-400 & C4 400W

This new pint-sized pairing continues PJB's downsizing trend. **GARETH MORGAN** packs his Suitcase

KEY FEATURES

PJB Suitcase Compact BG-400 and C4 400W

- **PRICE** Suitcase Compact £899, C4 £399.
- **DESCRIPTION** SC: twin-channel 300W digital bass guitar combo. 14mm marine grade plywood cabinet with 4x5" PJB Piranha Type-B speakers and front porting. C4: 400W bass guitar cabinet. 14mm marine grade plywood cabinet with 4X5" PJB Piranha Type-B speakers and front porting. Made in China
- **CONNECTIONS** Input A, input B (both with mute/low/high toggle switch), effects loop, tuner and preamp out jack sockets, aux out and headphone mini jack socket, XLR DI out with ground/lift switch, extension speaker out, Speakon socket
- **CONTROLS** two of input level, bass, mid and treble controls, limiter level (with on/off switch), aux level and master volume
- **DIMENSIONS** SC & C4: 340x360x320mm
- **WEIGHT** SC: 18kg/40lbs C4: 13.1kg/29lbs
- **CONTACT** Synergy Distribution (0121) 270 6485 **synergydistribution.co.uk**

After establishing American Acoustic Development in 1998, London-born bass player Phil Jones started producing bass amps under the PJB umbrella in 2002. Fitting his cabs and combos with five-inch speakers (Jones' own Piranha models) was a revolutionary move, rewriting the rule book on how big bass speakers needed to be.

PJB has continued to push the envelope ever since, fitting the wonderful Double Four combo with four-inch speakers and downsizing its products at every opportunity. One of the most recent developments was the introduction of the Suitcase Compact, a smaller, lighter and more powerful version of the original Suitcase combo.

To begin with, the SC kicks out 50 watts more power from the class D amplifier within its 14mm marine-grade plywood housing. Covered with mottled vinyl, it's shorter and shallower and weighs 4kg less than the Suitcase, so the single top-mounted leather strap is ample for lugging purposes. The speaker payload is the same – four five-inch Piranha Type Bs – but with porting slots along the side rather than the bottom.

A degree of simplification has been undertaken with the control panel: there are still two lines of controls, one for each channel, and each has an input jack with a mute/high/low toggle switch and input level control, but the EQ is three-band as opposed to five, with +/-18dB available for bass (80Hz), mid (1kHz) and treble (12kHz).

It's undeniably a straightforward system for matching the levels of multiple basses, whether mixing active and passive or acoustic and electric, or even bass and guitar for jamming purposes. There's also an on/off switch and level control for the onboard limiter, aux in level control with mini jack socket for mp3 players, etc, headphone mini jack and master volume control. The back panel houses an effects loop, tuner and preamp out jack sockets and a balanced XLR DI out with ground/lift switch.

PJB also fits an extension speaker out Speakon socket, with which we connected the C4 cabinet. The C4 is exactly the same size and speaker loading as the SC, its 5kg lighter payload a reflection of the lack of amp within, while representing awesome portability for a 400-watt cab.

In use

No matter how many times we come across PJB gear, we never cease to be amazed at how much bottom end it delivers. Piranha speakers are truly full-range, so as well as being fat and solid, the midrange has stature and a natural punch, and a similar vibe emanates from highs – which are clean, clear and devoid of the synthetic snappiness that horn-equipped kit can induce.

The SC is focused, virtually guaranteeing audibility without having to be seriously cranked, but it's also loud enough for many medium-volume situations. Adding the C4 cab provides a tonne of tight, clean headroom – stand right in front and you'll know exactly how loud you're playing. The limiter works just as it should, so you need to be in a fairly cranked state for it to kick in, and when it does the effect is subtle rather than suffocating.

With EQ, its simplicity makes dialling in room-shaking boom, snappy funk with fingers and head-slicing cut and bite a simple procedure. A number of small tweaks get you a decent scooped-mids sound, a rootsy dub vibe or a more lightweight offering for the dreaded hollow-stage bass trap scenario. And there's plenty more to be had where that came from.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE

The Markbass CMD 102P Combo £1,243 is a 400W belter with two yellow-coned 10-inch neodymium speakers and Markbass' simple-but-effective EQ. Or you could go for the 250W **EBS Magni 500-210 £799**. It weighs 21kg (47lbs) and has a four-band EQ and digital/analogue preamp. **Laney**'s **Richter RB8 300W Combo £460** delivers 300W in an easy-to-use analogue package.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ A small rig with a surprisingly big sound, that looks cool and businesslike
+ Wonderfully natural sounding with superb clarity and punch
+ Lightweight and portable
- It's not cheap... but you get what you pay for
- Some valve fans will turn up their noses

A high-quality small rig that'll make you sound the business in a wide variety of settings with plenty of volume on tap, yet shorn of the back-breaking weight

9/10

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LITTLE BY LITTLE

G&B travels to Israel to find out how boutique guitar builder B&G Guitars made the transition from producing a few instruments a year to 30 per month without losing its handmade charm and character

Story and photography **Huw Price**

Based in a side street in the south of Tel Aviv, B&G Guitars combined the essence of a small-bodied 'catalogue' acoustic from the 1930s with 1950s Gibson-inspired aesthetics and contemporary production methods to develop the Little Sister guitar and Big Sister bass.

Admittedly, the sumptuously produced production video, combined with a fantastic Little Sister-driven soundtrack pressed all of our buttons here at *G&B*, and when we finally got our hands on the guitar last autumn, we weren't disappointed. It seems we're not alone, and things have been moving very quickly for B&G.

Having started out as a low-volume manufacturer in a cramped backstreet workshop, B&G has moved into much larger premises with dedicated areas for woodworking, spraying, pickup manufacture, and assembly and setup work.

Tucked away off the beaten track in the south of Tel Aviv, not far from the port of Old Jaffa, a nondescript metal door opens onto B&G's bright, busy and well-organised HQ. Stepping inside, out of the mid-morning sunshine, we are greeted by B&G CEO Avi Goldfinger and fellow co-founders Eliran Barashi and Yotam 'Kiki' Goldstein, who are B&G's head luthiers.

Our tour starts in the woodworking room, where all of B&G's heavy-duty machinery is kept, with belt and thickness sanders on the right-hand side and a long padded workbench taking up most of the opposite side. Mounted on a board above the workbench is a selection of hand tools, and on the far wall there are rows of shelves to store B&G's various jigs and templates. Eliran begins by describing how the bodies are made.

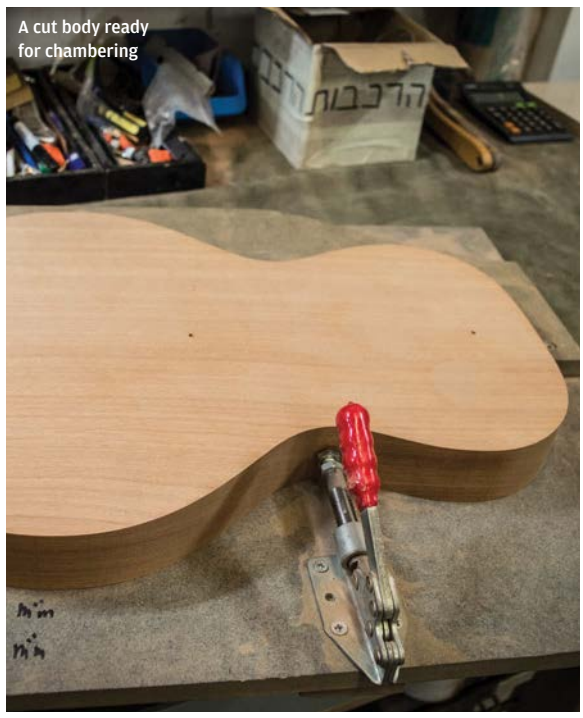
"What we do is basically old-school stuff," he points out. "The body shape is drawn onto the mahogany body then we cut out the body shape on the bandsaw. The router template is attached with two screws, where the neck pocket and pickup cavities will eventually be, and we use the table router to get the outline. A separate template is used for the neck pocket and the chambering jig has removable inserts depending if the body is going to be a cutaway or no cutaway and right- or left-handed."

I notice the template seems to have been designed for a stop tailpiece. Eliran confirms that they were considered as an option when the Little Sister template was being made, but it was abandoned because "a lot of the guitar's vibe comes from the trapeze tailpiece that we make, and it gives some overtones you won't get from a stop tailpiece. Our pickups are so microphonic, you can hear that. We did try a Bigsby once but it was a terrible mistake, a real sound killer, but we are trying to dream up a vibrato design of our own."

A row of completed bodies sit in a rack next to the thickness sander with glue squeeze-out running out of the neck joints. Eliran describes how B&G uses urea formaldehyde glue to join the maple caps >

Co-founder and head luthier Yotam 'Kiki' Goldstein with a Brazilian rosewood fingerboard blank

A pin router template for f-holes



A cut body ready for chambering

A body contouring template with removable sections for different body styles

The hide glue squeeze-out flakes off once it's dry

The truss-rod adjuster and brass washer will be concealed beneath a brass plate

B&G makes its own truss rods. These anchors are for the Big Sister and Little Sister

onto the bodies and hide glue for neck joints. A lot of these production decisions were inspired by a '53 Les Paul that Eliran restored a few years earlier.

"I took measurements of the binding, samples of the glue and everything I could get my hands on," he says. "I was even able to measure how deep they cut the fret slots. The thing I like about hide glue is that you don't need high-pressure clamping, and it sets like glass. This squeeze-out you can see will just flake off, so it's easy to clean up.

"Once we have made the body, we move on to the top and use a template with the same screw attachment to cut the f-holes. Before we glue the tops, we cut the control cavity and control-plate recess.

"The maple caps are glued on oversized and we use the table router to clean up the edges. The body is ready for the neck pocket to be routed, then we drill the holes for the switch and pots, and it's basically ready for sanding and the roundover at the back. We rout the pickup cavities after the neck is attached so we can get a true centre line for the strings to line up exactly with the polepieces."

These days, B&G production is done in batches rather than on a guitar-by-guitar basis, so the workshop will set up for making bodies one week and necks the following week. "We don't really have a production line as such,"

"What matters is attention to the details. That's what I consider makes a great guitar, not the machine you use to cut the wood"

explains Avi, "it's more of a semi-production line with three stations.

"Right now, customers are ordering equal numbers of cutaways and non-cutaways. We get a lot of repeat orders from players who have one style body and want the other style, too. The non-cuts give you a slightly bigger sound because they're 5.5mm thicker, and the cutaways are a bit more in your face."

Eliran details the neck-building process: "It starts with marking out the profile from a template onto a block of mahogany. Obviously, you have to pick the right side so the neck ends up quarter-sawn. We rough-cut on a band saw, then get the shape with a flush trim Robo-Sander in a drill press. We rout the truss-rod channel so it follows the underside curve of the neck and we make our own truss rods – just like the vintage Gibson ones."

So will B&G be getting a CNC machine before too long? "Well, if the orders keep increasing, maybe we'll have to," Eliran admits. "It doesn't matter if something is cut on a CNC machine or a bandsaw. It's about what the neck shape feels like, how everything must be centred and the type of glues you use. What matters is attention to the details. That's what I consider makes a great guitar, not the machine you use to cut the wood. But right now we don't need CNC machines to make 30 guitars a month."

Nevertheless, B&G's production process has been adapted to meet increased demand, with numerous bespoke jigs and customised tools, as Eliran explains: "You can spend two days making a jig, but with that you can make hundreds of guitars. In this sort of job, where we're making our own-design guitars, you have to build many of your tools because you can't buy them.

"Kiki's dad makes tools for us and we asked him to come up with something so we could go from one fingerboard radius to another without loads of set-up time. His solution is genius and I haven't seen anybody else do it like this.

"Leo Fender designed a similar cradle set-up to ours, but the radius was fixed. Here, we can go from one radius to another >

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A row of sprayed bodies awaiting final buffing and assembly

This custom-made fingerboard radius cradle has various levels for different radii

Rami Barashi sands the sprayed body edges to achieve a faux binding effect

The jig used to drill tuner post holes through the side of slotted headstocks

"In this sort of job, where we're making our own-design guitars, you have to build many of your tools because you can't buy them"

very quickly. Fingerboards are taped to the underside of the cradle and they are swung across the belt sander to make the radius.

"Kiki's dad also made the fret-slotting jig. A thick metal bar has a milled notch for each fret position, which fixes the cutter tool in the exact positions. The cutter is a Dremel in a special mounting with a saw disk attachment. The really clever part is that the cutter follows the radius, so the fret slot has an even depth all the way across."

These days, B&G presses the frets in with fish glue after the board has been glued to the neck, and the side dot positions are 'eyeballed' rather than measured, for a more vintage look. The dots are 3/32-inch wide rather than 2.5mm because B&G prefers its guitars to look and feel American rather than European.

The company's luthiers have also had to adapt to the different working conditions in the new premises. "In the old workshop, we were dealing with higher temperatures," Eliran recalls, "so we used to slightly tighten up the truss rod before gluing the board onto the neck. Once the glue had dried, we'd slacken off the truss rod and we'd have a bit of natural relief and no problems with backbow. Here in the new workshop, we don't need to do that."

Time is pressing as our tour of the factory winds towards its conclusion, so we move on to the spraying area. With so many instruments to spray, B&G's paint guy Rami Barashi now has a spacious booth with proper extraction fans, and nitrocellulose lacquer is used exclusively.

Outside the booth is a drying area, where Little Sisters in every conceivable shade of vintage sunburst are hung up to dry. Avi explains how "an unexpected positive result of moving to the new shop was faster drying time thanks to powerful air conditioning and wooden partitions that reduce humidity."

Once the finishing process is completed, the guitar bodies are taken to the assembly room, where David Geva makes the pickups and installs the electronics, while Kiki performs the final assembly and set-up work. Once signed off, the guitars are cased, packaged up and labelled for shipping to lucky customers all over the world.

For more on B&G Guitars, go to bngguitars.com
For UK orders, visit thenorthamericanguitar.com

This pin router template is used to cut the slots in the headstock

B&G's spray booth

A custom-made B&G tool used to cut fret slots that retain an even depth across the radius

TONY BACON

Tony Bacon is an author and journalist who writes about musical instruments, musicians, and music. His books include *The Ultimate Guitar Book*, *The Telecaster Guitar Book*, and *History Of The American Guitar*, and his latest is *The Gibson 335 Guitar Book* (Backbeat), which tells the story of those great Gibson semi-solids.

THE MAN BEHIND THE BRAND

Dan Smith was behind many of Fender's iconic designs and ran the Custom Shop for five years. **TONY BACON** remembers his life

A brand is just a brand – it's people who make a brand what it is. Fender, for example. The Fender brand has changed a lot since Leo Fender renamed his K&F company to Fender in 1946. Leo sold out to CBS in '65; CBS sold it to the current owners in '85. The only things that have remained unchanged between then and now are the Fender name on the headstock and the names of the classic models. Producing something like a solidbody electric guitar has to be a team effort, including those who design, market, make and sell the instruments. But there are key figures who stand out, who make things happen.

Dan Smith, who was a leading figure in Fender's electric guitar division from 1981 to 2006, was one of those key people, and I was sad to hear that he passed away in September at the age of just 70. It was Dan who reshaped the Fender lines, redefining the look and feel of the classic models for a new generation and helping to steer the firm through some tough times. He was at the heart of the crucial management buy-out from CBS, the creative struggle during the years immediately following and the opening of a new factory in Corona. If that buy-out had failed and CBS had not found a buyer, it could easily have marked the end for Fender.

The first time I met Dan was at the Fender plant back in the early 90s when I was writing a book about the company's guitars. I liked him immediately. He was friendly and hospitable in that apparently natural way that a lot of Americans seem to have. He knew guitars inside out, and I saw that he was a real dynamo who could enthuse and drive those around him.

He told me that when he started at Fender many people hated what the company had become. "We thought we knew how bad it was," he said, "but we took it for granted that they could make Telecasters and Stratocasters the way they used to make them. We were wrong. So many things had been changed in the Fender factory at Fullerton."

Dan was shocked as he first toured the plant: "I remember looking at the body contours. People were complaining about contours, and here I am looking at racks of hundreds of guitars. Every one of those guitars had a different edge contour! We went and pulled instruments out of the warehouse and did general re-inspections on 800-plus guitars. Out of those, I think only about 15 passed the existing criteria."

One of the first things Dan did was to revise the overall specifications of the regular Stratocaster. He moved it back to a four-bolt neck joint and to what he called the right headstock (approximating the pre-65 shape), and he reinstated a body-end truss-rod adjuster. The four-screw Fender Standard Stratocaster that started production at the Fullerton factory toward the end of 1981 is still known by many Fender fans as the Dan Smith Strat.

Dan oversaw the beginning of Fender seriously copying itself by creating vintage reissues. He also helped bring the Squier brand to fruition. And he pioneered Fender production outside America. "I always operated with the theory that 85 per cent of the product you offered was stuff that people demanded, or wanted, or you knew they were going to buy," he explained. "And then if you were really successful with that, the other 15 per cent allowed you to experiment and try to come up with something that people didn't know they wanted yet. And with that 15 per cent, you have to be in a position to afford to be wrong."

When I asked Dan about his retirement from Fender in 2006, he was typically reticent about pushing his own achievements forward. "Part of being able to retire," he told me, "was that I knew we'd accomplished a lot. And the heart of the company is always the product. I could walk away proud, knowing Fender was so far ahead of where it had been, in terms of technology and training and people, and that it was going to continue and go way beyond that."

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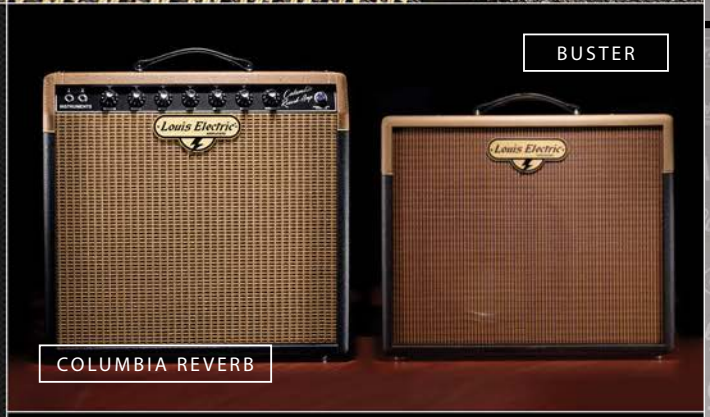

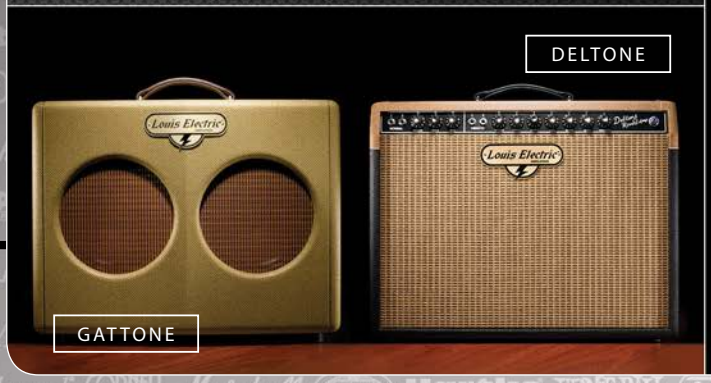

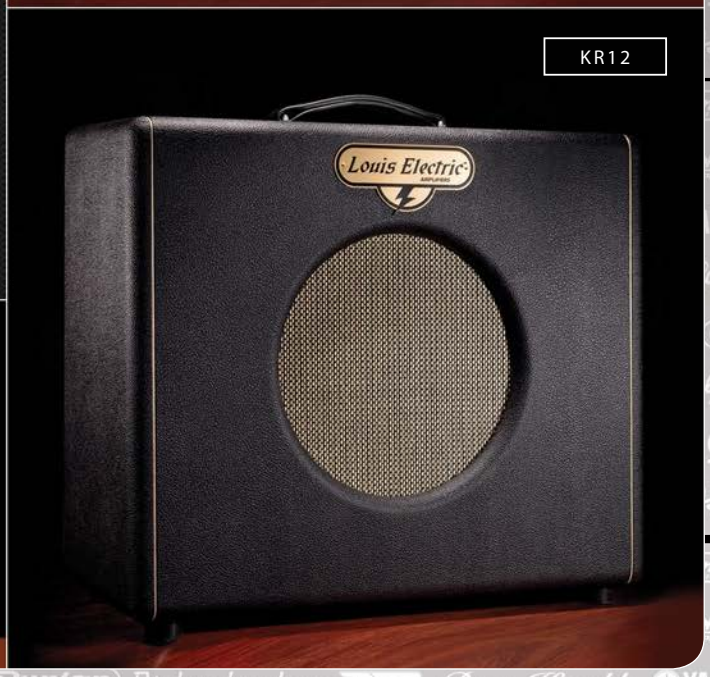

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Vintage TIME MACHINES

1950s WATKINS WESTMINSTER 'BLACK STAR'

Stripped down to the bare wood and fitted with a pair of EL90 valves, this late-50s Watkins Westminster 'Black Star' still carries the warm, mellow tones it helped pioneer

The early days of amplification were, ironically, relatively quiet. Simple tone controls and low power resulted in poor high-treble and bass output. Sufficient for the lap steel Hawaiian guitar – which surged in popularity at the time – but entirely too quiet for the blossoming skiffle and rock movements.

As tastes in music evolved in the late 40s and early 50s, instrument makers scrambled to meet new demands. Venues were filling up, and guitarists were being drowned out by the bustle of the audience. Heavier strings and heavier picks just weren't cutting it; they needed a new method of amplification. Around this time, brothers Charlie, Reg and Sid Watkins began to experiment. Their shop in Balham, London specialised in guitars and accordions, drawing musicians from around the city, most of whom had the same request: give us more volume.

A visionary of his time, Charlie teamed up with Arthur O'Brien and Bill Purkis to create several experimental amp models with a new tremolo effect – predecessors to the Westminster. As they polished the mechanics, they overlooked one very obvious feature: the design. The first Westminster had a relatively tyipcal pre-war style: a compact combo, simple and grey-covered. Models began to pique interest in the Balham shop after Charlie – at the recommendation of a friend – swapped the minimalist look with contrasting colour areas separated by inlaid gold string. The red and cream version became known as the 'Red Star' model, while the black and cream one earned the title 'Black Star'.

The Beatles used a Watkins Westminster in their early days at the Star Club

The new aesthetic – along with the 14-watt, two-channel, four-input layout and louder sound – was adopted quickly by the early English rock scene. The Beatles used a Watkins Westminster in their early days at the Star Club in Hamburg. While the Westminster was eventually eclipsed by younger, more technologically advanced brands, the warm, rich tone became synonymous with early English rock, solidifying Watkins in the annals of gear history.

VITAL STATISTICS

50s Watkins Westminster 'Black Star'

- **PRICE** £780
- **YEAR** Late 1950s
- **TYPE** 14-watt valve amp
- **BUILD** Stripped to its bare wood, with a pair of EL90s in the power amp
- **CONTACT** Reverb Seller Soundgas: Reverb.com/soundgas
- **SEE MORE** Reverb.com/UK

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Vintage BENCH TEST

1966 FENDER JAGUAR

Leo Fender's second offset offering took surf music, and later the alt-rock world, by storm. **HUW PRICE** spends some time taming an exotic jungle cat

Although Fender made several different types of guitar before the CBS takeover, four models are clearly more significant than all the others. In a sense, the Jaguar was to the Jazzmaster what the Stratocaster was to the Telecaster. Both of these pairings demonstrate clear evolutionary steps, where the subsequent model carried some ideas over from the previous one, while addressing certain issues and introducing new features.

The Jaguar was to the Jazzmaster what the Stratocaster was to the Telecaster

The Jaguar shares the Jazzmaster's offset body shape, vibrato design and the rhythm-circuit concept, but it's a very different guitar. Individual pickup switches replace the three-way toggle selector and the third switch activates a bass frequency roll-off filter.

Mechanically activated string 'mutes' or dampeners were a popular feature on many guitars at the time, but the Jaguar was the first Fender model to have one onboard. It's a spring-loaded device, with a foam strip that lifts to butt up against the strings. When deactivated, which will probably be most of the time, it can rattle a bit. The foam on this particular specimen is most likely non-original, but if a wider strip replaced it, the foam would contact the bridge pickup when deactivated and this might help to dampen any unwanted vibration. >

The staggered slugs are correct for a post-64 Jaguar pickup and you can see the notched metal claw Fender used for hum reduction

Not even a decade apart, Fender's mid-60s sunburst style bears little resemblance to the '59 sunburst on the right

KEY FEATURES

'66 Fender Jaguar

- **PRICE** £6,699
- **DESCRIPTION** Solidbody electric guitar, made in the USA
- **BUILD** Alder body, bolt-on maple neck, 7.25" radius Brazilian rosewood fingerboard with binding, block inlays and 22 frets
- **HARDWARE** Vintage vibrato bridge with six adjustable saddles, period-correct F stamped tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Two single-coil pickups, master volume and tone, individual pickup selector switches, bass roll-off switch, rhythm circuit switch with volume and tone controls
- **SCALE LENGTH** 610 mm/24"
- **NECK WIDTH** 41mm at nut, 51mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 20mm at first fret, 22.5mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 34.5mm at nut, 54mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 4.2kg/9.25lbs
- **FINISH** Three Tone Sunburst
- **CONTACT** Cranes Music 029 2039 8215 **www.cranes.co.uk**

The pickups have a very different shape to the Jazzmaster's, as Fender opted for a taller, narrower coil. It may look much like a Strat pickup, but the covers and flatwork shapes and sizes are not the same – plus, Fender used a notched metal surround to minimise hum – often called 'the claw'.

These Jaguar pickups have the post-64 staggered magnets, but it's a very different stagger to Fender's previous designs. The D and G slugs are highest, with the E slugs slightly shorter. The A and B slugs are the shortest and only just protrude above the cover.

Jaguar pickups are mounted directly onto the body with foam spacers rather than springs

Jaguar pickups are mounted directly onto the body with foam spacers rather than springs for height adjustment. The foam seems original on this guitar, because there's no longer any upwards pressure and the heights can't be adjusted.

The serial number, bound neck, F-stamped tuners, block inlays and early-style headstock logo all indicate this guitar was probably made during the latter half of 1966, so the October '66 neck date stamp seems spot on. The volume control pot is a 1M CTS, date-stamped the 17th week of 1966. All electronic components look original and untouched.

The Jaguar's removable control plates were a return to the Tele concept of easy access for maintenance and, looking under the plates, you can see the vivid contrast between the darkened middle areas of the finish and the vivid custard yellow that was factory-original. The style of the sunburst and the application of the lacquer looks very different to the way Fender did it in the late 50s.

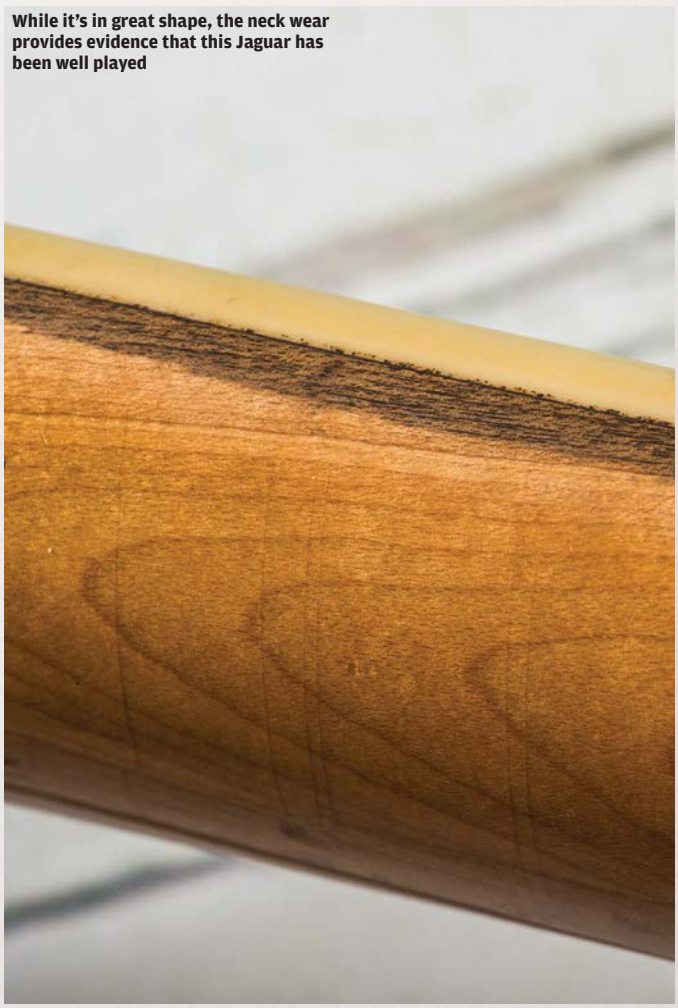
Compared to a '59 Jazzmaster, the finish shows no sign of shrinking into the wood and it appears much thicker and more opaque. There are barely any grain lines to be seen. The outside edges are darker and the demarcation lines between the red, yellow and brown/black are sharper.

Lacquer checking is less evident and it tends to go across the grain rather than along it. Although most vintage-guitar enthusiasts would probably prefer the older-style sunburst, it's worth considering that Fender may have been mindful about the advent >

The Jaguar was Fender's first model with an integral string mute. It's great if you want to sound like Luther Perkins, but they can rattle

The centre of the burst is an opaque yellow that almost completely obscures the grain, and the red area is bright and unfaded

Two of these switches turn the pickups on and off. The third activates a preset bass roll off that opens up some interesting sonic possibilities



While it's in great shape, the neck wear provides evidence that this Jaguar has been well played

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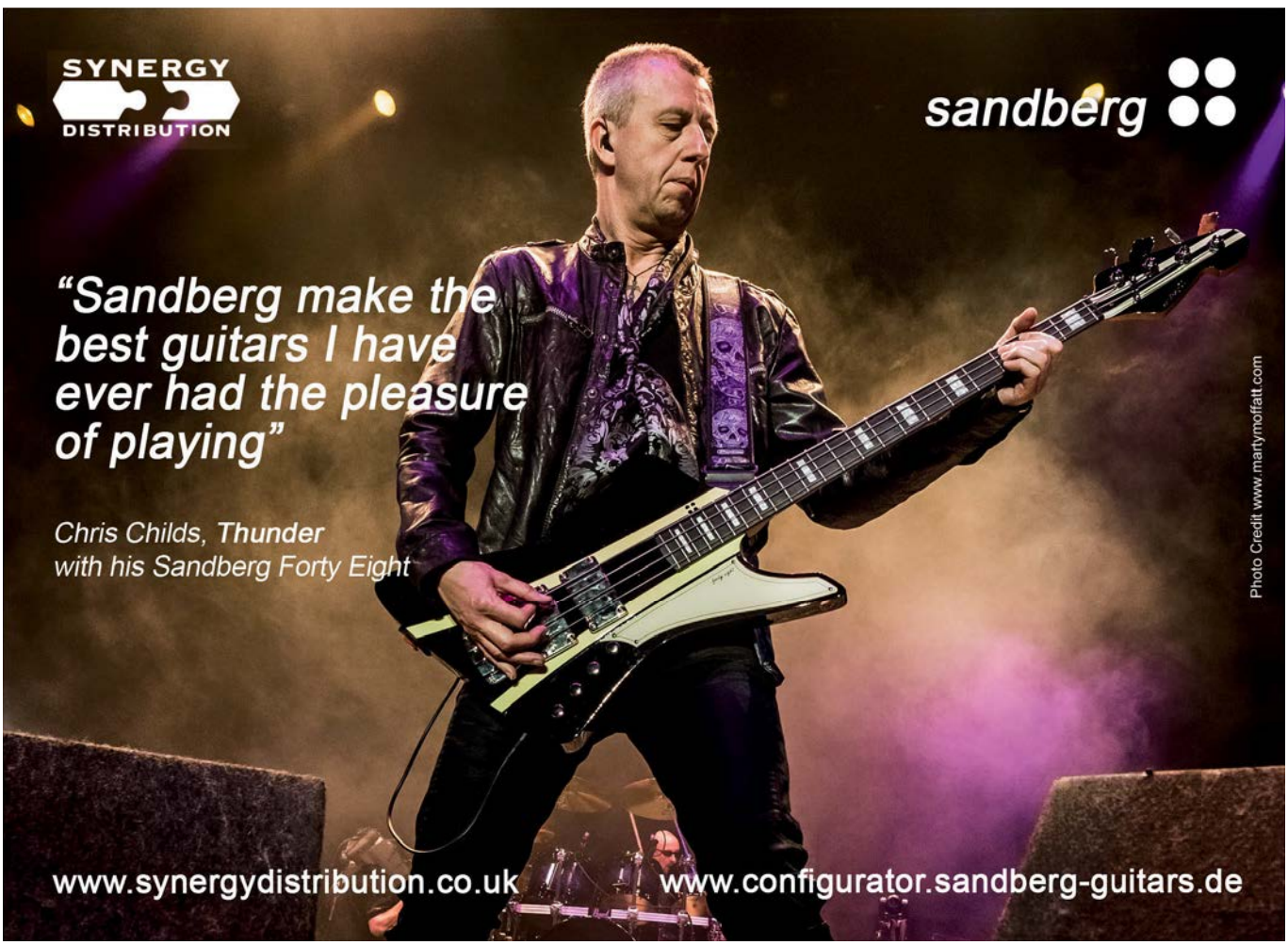
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of television and the sudden importance of getting noticed in a technicolour world by using bold primary colours.

Fender guitars generally had a longer scale length than Gibsons, but at 24 inches, the Jaguar's was actually shorter. Bound fingerboards were another new feature for Fenders and, as with many of the company's ventures into territory unknown, you get the sense it was still figuring out how to do it right. This Jaguar's neck is curved until it meets the binding, then it squares off to the fretboard, resulting in a very pronounced shoulder.

The nut was installed flush with the fingerboard and the binding was cut around the ends of the nut. You can also see the top of the nut was lacquered over to blend it in. Presumably, the frets once had nibs, but although the original frets remain, the nibs wore away long ago. However, the fingerboard and inlays are in clean and fairly unworn condition.

In use

Shortening the scale length gives the Jaguar a more familiar 'feel' than the Jazzmaster, simply because the frets don't appear to be so far away. However, the flip side is that all the notes are much closer together, which may not be ideal for those with sausage fingers. The short scale also gives a looser and bendier action, but with a little less treble ring in the tone.

This sounds very balanced and sustains willingly, but you can barely feel the body resonating

As vintage Fenders go, this is a bit of a heavyweight and you can hear it in the unplugged tone. This Jaguar sounds very balanced and it sustains willingly, but you can barely feel the body resonating. The short of finger will appreciate the shorter stretches and, overall, this Jaguar feels very easy to play.

However, there is a problem with one fret divot and because it's under the B string at the third fret, you can't work around it. Since the other frets are low but serviceable, it might be better to consider >

Above **The checking on the front of the headstock shows up as neat and straight lines formed across the grain and under the waterslide decal**

Above **The checking on the rear of the headstock looks so different from the front, you might wonder if the lacquer was applied thicker or whether a different formulation was being used**

replacing just the third fret rather than attempting to level them all.

Disappointingly, only the bridge pickup was working properly when we had this guitar. The neck pickup output was very low and I couldn't get a resistance reading. However, the bridge pickup reads 6.3 ohms and the bass roll-off feature is in good shape.

Both pots function normally, albeit a tad noisily, but it's nothing that a squirt of switch cleaner won't fix. So, in a sense, this is a review of half a Jaguar, and the worst case scenario is that the neck pickup will need a rewind.

The bridge pickup has a distinctive and unusual voicing, but it should be noted that the top of the cover is 7mm below the strings and the pickup can't be coaxed upwards. The tone is relatively big and smooth, but the treble sounds more rolled off than you might expect, especially given the 1M volume pot.

I heard enough to conclude this guitar has loads of potential – a fine example of a late-60s Jaguar

The bridge pickup's wiry honk is really enjoyable and it produces absolutely classic 60s-style rhythm sounds. The upper midrange has a strong emphasis that's not unlike a cocked-wah tone. Although there may not be that much call for bass cutting these days, it works particularly well for funky chops and also for clearing up murky fuzz tones.

With brighter fuzzboxes and a touch of reverb, the bass cut puts you straight into Spaghetti Western territory, as attention shifts to the grainy bite and clustered short echos in the springs. Another cool trick you can employ is to activate the bass cut and roll back some of the treble to achieve a band-pass filter effect for an unusual boxy overdrive.

This guitar is in very good, original condition and plays pretty well, even with old strings and an iffy setup. It's a shame about the neck pickup, but I've heard enough to conclude this guitar has loads of potential – a fine example of a late-60s Jaguar.

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JAZZ CONVERSATION

Faithless vocalist turned E-Type Boys band leader Maxi Jazz has built up a collection of fine guitars, gathered from all corners of the globe. **GARY WALKER** gets a private tour

Gear photography **Eleanor Jane** Portraits **Damon Hope**

You'll know him best as the loose-limbed, mesmeric-voiced rap poet and globally recognisable force of nature that fronts Faithless. But away from the 15 million album sales, 20 years of world tours and hits such as *God Is A DJ* and *Insomnia* that shot the band into the heart of the mass consciousness, Maxi Jazz has been living a secret life as a guitar collector.

As Faithless strode across the globe, playing to packed stadiums, arenas and festivals, Maxi – a 59-year-old Buddhist who was raised in Croydon – would use his down time to slip away and trawl the guitar shops of the world and indulge his enduring passion for the instrument he first played as a teenager.

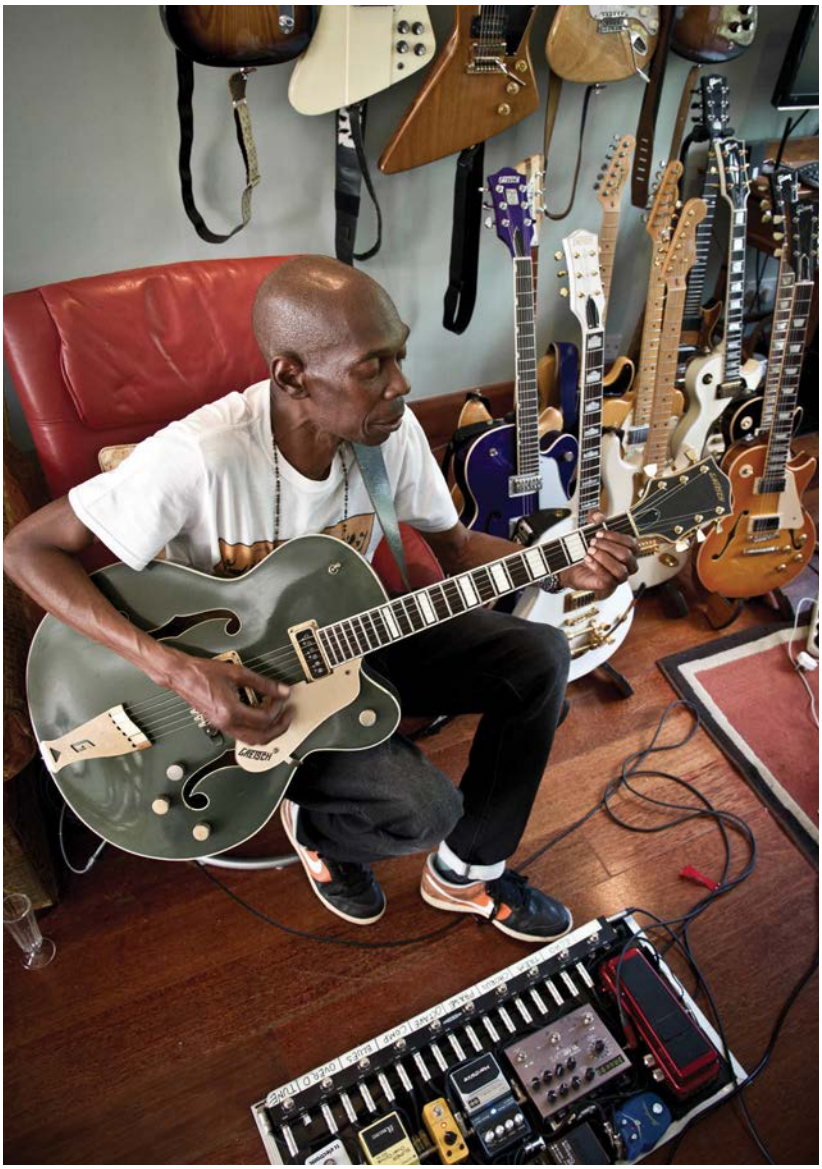
For the past year, Jazz has been combining touring with Faithless with guitar and vocal duties in his new funk and blues band, Maxi Jazz & The E-Type Boys. The collection, divided between his home in London and a second house in Jamaica, now stretches to several dozen guitars. A 1954 Gretsch Country Club, a Gretsch Brian Setzer Hot Rod, a Telecaster bought from none other than John Squire of The Stone Roses, a Galloup S-type, several Strats, four Les Pauls, four ES-335s and a pair of Firebirds are among the highlights.

When we meet Maxi for a guided tour of the London division of his guitar arsenal, he's fresh from the airport, having returned from what he confirms was the final Faithless gig – a headline show at Ibiza Rocks, two decades after the band's first appearance on the Balearic party island. He tells us that the E-Type Boys are now his sole focus, and talks us proudly through the main guitars in his life – and how they shaped his new band's debut album, *Simple... Not Easy*.

"I started playing the guitar around about age 14," remembers Maxi. "My mum bought my brother a guitar. Only God knows why. He messed about on it for all of three weeks and then it sat in the corner. About two years later, when it had about four inches of dust on it, I thought, 'Right, I'm liberating that'. By then, it only had three strings on it, but I taught myself to play *Greensleeves* on one string.

"Eventually, my mum bought me an electric guitar for Christmas when I was 17, which was >

Opposite page **Maxi Jazz with his Gretsch Brian Setzer Hot Rod**
Above left **Maxi's Galloup S-type**
Above right **'54 Gretsch Country Club**



Above **Maxi at home with his 1954 Gretsch Country Club**
Top right **Through the f-hole of the Country Club**
Above right **Maxi's Gretsch Brian Setzer Hot Rod: "a lovely guitar with a really beautiful tone"**

great. It was an imitation Strat, I don't remember what make it was, and the next one was an Ibanez LP-type. Cherry Sunburst. It was a very nice guitar, but I had quite a difficult relationship at the time, and both those guitars got broke – not by me...

"The next one was my Tokai, which I bought in a pet shop! It was a bright red Strat right in the window, £125, so I went in there and bought it. This was 1984. I started to write little riffs and funky things, four-chords riffs and little progressions, but that was pretty much it. All I would do is jam along to the radio, I never really learnt too many chords. Various guitar players would say, 'Maxi have you tried this chord, or do you know about this one?' and I just taught myself over the years, and I never really took it seriously until maybe 10 years ago."

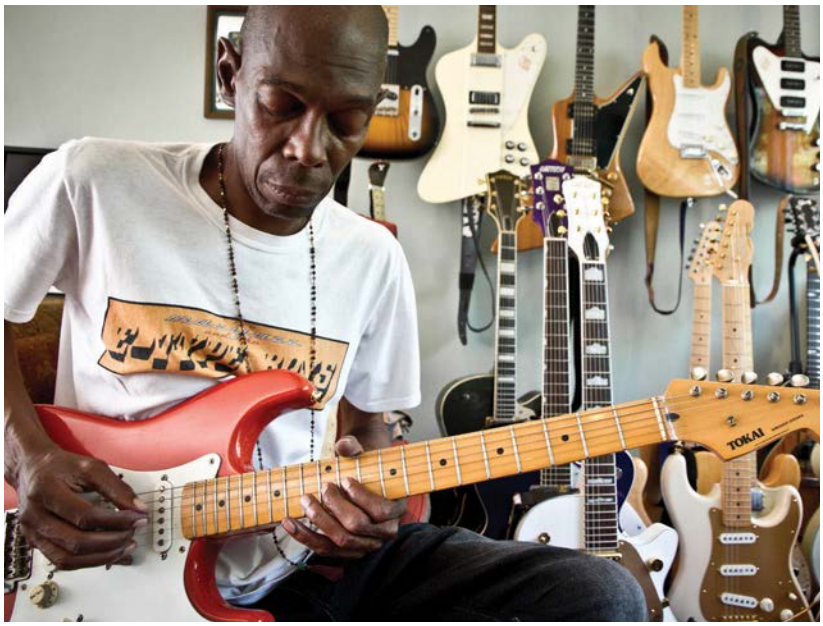
The seeds of what would become the E-Type Boys were sewn during a stay at Maxi's Jamaican house in 2005, when he was struck down by a severe case of flu. It was there, in the middle of a feverish sleepless night that he penned the first composition for *Simple... Not Easy*, although it would be another 11 years before it saw the light of day.

"I got ill and as a result wrote my very first song," he recalls. "I'd wake up in the middle of the night covered in sweat, feeling like death. It's not nice being ill in a tropical country. I decided to do something that would cause me to stay awake long enough that when I did go to bed I would sleep through. I'd just bought a 50th Anniversary Strat in Kingston, and I took it into my room with a piece of paper and a pen, with the intention of turning one of these four-chord riffs into a song – and I wrote the whole thing in an hour and a half. That song was *Back To The Bottle*. It was odd because I wrote it so fast, and every chord I tried seemed to work.

"I spent two hours learning how to play and sing the song at the same time, because clearly you're going to want to play the song to your mum in the morning. The next song didn't come along for another three years, but after that one came along, I thought, 'Okay, let me try and do some more', and I wrote another three that year. I'm a Gemini and I get bored super-fast, so if I've written a song that I like and continue to like... I thought, 'There must be something to this, I'll give it a go'."

Although Maxi recovered from the flu, the guitar-buying bug took a permanent hold, and he happily recalls the six-string shopping trips he would embark on while touring the world with Faithless.

"That's when it all really started, particularly on tour, because you get dumped in the middle of a city



for a day or two, and you generally have two or three hours to kill before a soundcheck," he says. "Me and the guys would have a wander around – God forbid we'd pass a guitar shop, because I've got to go in and have a look, and before you know it there's a guitar in a case and it's coming out of the shop with me – liberated forever.

"I've got a purple Gretsch, a Brian Setzer Hot Rod, a lovely guitar with a really beautiful tone, and it looks amazing. I remember walking down Denmark Street and seeing this amazing flash of purple. It's very rare I buy a guitar just because of the way it looks, but I saw this flash of purple and thought, 'What's that?'. I went into the shop and said, 'Can I have a go on that please?'. The guy got it down, tuned it up for me and played a chord, and I said, 'I'll have it!'. It sounded so nice!

"The store owner was wrapping the guitar up and getting the case, and he said, 'I always ask my customers what made them leave the house to go and buy a guitar', and I said the truth was I'd sent quite a few of my guitars over to Jamaica, where I have a studio, and I had an empty guitar hook on my wall in my bedroom. It used to bug me every morning when I woke up, so I thought I'd better fill it with something... he loved that!

"I've got a Gretsch Country Club, which is three years older than me. It was made in 1954 and it sounds amazing, but I dare not take it out of the house because if anything happened to it I'd be gutted. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing and I use it for recording. My mate Jake [Libretto], who plays guitar in my band, has a friend, Graham, who runs the Guitar Classics shop in Clapham and he took me round there. Oh my God... I must have bought four guitars off him!

"I bought a Gibson J-45, a Brook Bros, that Gretsch, and also I was stood there thinking, 'I don't have a Rickenbacker', so I bought a 360 off him. It's 18 years old and absolutely lovely – it looks brand new. It plays like a dream.

"I've got a Gretsch Electromatic [Pro Jet], too. My other guitar player, Chris Dover, has got one and it's so nice looking and sounds so good. They're really lovely, and cheap as chips, too.

"On the album, I essentially used Strats, Les Pauls and the Brian Setzer Gretsch. I've got a black Les Paul Classic 1960 Reissue, and if you put it on the treble position and crank your amp up, you *will* sound like Jimmy Page. It sounds awesome. I used that on *Homesick Blues* because it needs a bit of a swampy feel to it. I don't even know why I brought >

Top left **A Rickenbacker 360 bought on a shopping trip to Guitar Classics in Clapham**
Top right **The 360's Rick-O-Sound and Standard outputs**
Above left **The Tokai S-type Maxi found for sale in the window of a London pet shop**
Above right **A Gretsch Electromatic Pro Jet with gold hardware**

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it. I just picked it up, took it along to the studio and thought, 'Let me try it on that' and it really worked. It's got such a grimy, melancholy sound.

"On *Change Our Destiny*, I used the Country Club, and on *Seize Your Power* it was the Setzer Hot Rod. On *Chasin' Shadows*, I played Jake's Strat and he played the Country Club. It's really mellow, but Jake's got a really attacking style so he brought the funk out of it and I played the Strat in a more mellow way, and the two guitars just sit down beautifully with each other."

Another favourite from Maxi's collection is his Galloup S-type, with pickups wound by one of the Fender Custom Shop's best-known employees.

"It's an awesome guitar. Bryan Galloup makes acoustic guitars, so it's quite interesting that he's made this Strat," says Maxi. "It's absolutely gorgeous and plays like a dream. The pickups were apparently wired by one Abigail Ybarra, who used to be the main pickup lady for Fender from 1958 until she retired a few years ago.

"It sounds like a bell when you play it, it's absolutely beautiful. It's another one I got off Graham. I'd just written a song called *Long Time Gone* about Jimi Hendrix, so naturally it had to have a Strat on it. Graham walked me past three old Fenders and pointed at the Galloup and I picked it up immediately, it's an amazing guitar."

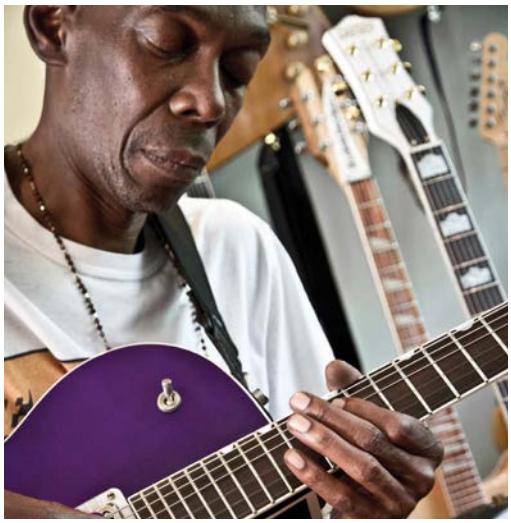
Maxi has a taste for Teles, too, and he's most proud of the one he bought from Squire – another guitar he didn't have to think too long or hard about acquiring. "I've got three Teles," he says. "I have a Thinline that belonged to John Squire. Martin Herbert, our guitar tech, does a lot of work with The Stone Roses and John was selling a few guitars. I said, 'Let me have a go with that one... I'll have it!'. It's very nice and worn in. It sounds great."

As Maxi continues to pull out desirable examples from his collection, we ask whether he has such a thing as a 'number one' guitar or, whisper it, a favourite. It's a notion he scotches quickly.

"If I said anything like that, their necks would start to fall off," he says with a hearty laugh. "Machines have a way of listening to what you're saying. There isn't a number one and I wouldn't dream of parting with any of them.

"I've got a Gibson Joe Bonamassa ES-335, which is incredible. It's really easy to play and sounds great. I have another 335, from 1974 – I've put a Stetsbar on it, and it's really good, too. I'm a big Johnny Winter fan, and he always used Firebirds, so I decided I would get – in the fullness of time – a white >

Above left **The Fender Thinline Telecaster Maxi bought from John Squire**
Top right **Maxi's pedalboard, featuring a Strymon TimeLine**
Above right **The Gibson Les Paul Classic 1960 Reissue used on the album**



This picture **Gibson E2 Explorer**
Top right **Maxi playing his Gretsch Brian Setzer Hot Rod**
Right **Gibson Joe Bonamassa ES-335**

MAXI'S AMPS

A collection of guitars as lust-worthy as Maxi's deserve to be played through amps that can do them justice. Although he's using Blackstar amps on the road with the E-Type Boys, the diminutive Yamaha THR caught Maxi's ear on a recent tour.

"I got to try out a Yamaha THR for a few days as my hotel room amp," he tells us. "What a wonderful thing! From a smooth, warm George Benson sound to Tony Iommi at the flick of a switch. Recommended!

"Live, I use Blackstar amps, they were really nice to us and sorted two out – a HT Studio 20 and an Artist 15. They're really good amps, very clear. I've got a Mesa/Boogie as well, and an old Fender Deluxe Reverb in my music room in my house."

Firebird like Johnny Winter's. I found one in Dublin and it had a sister that was like a kind of Chocolate Sunburst. I bought the white one, then woke up the next morning and thought, 'I can't leave that other guitar in the shop', so I took that one as well, and it's now in Jamaica, along with my Strat and another Tele I bought in San Francisco. I've also got a non-reverse Firebird. I was amazed by that because it's got P-90s on and it sounds exactly like a Strat, a fat Strat."

While his new band is very much a collective rather than simply a group of enlisted sessioneers, when it came to demoing the album Maxi played everything, and that meant having some basses to hand, too.

"I've got a Precision Bass and a really nice Jazz Bass, dark red, I've never quite seen one like it before," he says. "My mate, who's a trauma surgeon, just walked into my house one day with it and a bottle of champagne and gave me both. I played bass on the demos in Jamaica. I was there for the whole of the winter three years running and once I'd finished my studio, I'd go down and play all the instruments and knock the demos up, then I brought them home and played them to other people and got them to play their parts.

"All of the basslines on the record, I wrote, with the exception of the amazing intro on *Change Our Destiny*, which our bass player came up with and we all went, 'Oh my God!' and jumped on it immediately. I wrote pretty much the whole album for guitar, bass and drums, and once I got back to England it was just a matter of giving the other guys the CD, and they learnt the songs and came back.

"I'm quite a good boss in so far as I'm not going to say, 'Here is what you must play'. My view is: 'Here's a bassline, I'm happy to use it. If you come up with something better, that's just fine'."

Having completed our tour of his favourite guitars, we ask Maxi whether, now he's become a self-confessed guitar addict, his collection will continue to grow.

"Oh, there's nothing to be done about that," he replies without a moment's contemplation. "Absolutely nothing! As soon as I see something nice, it's always been my modus operandi to get it immediately because otherwise you might never see it again. I'll need a bigger house..."

Maxi Jazz & The E-Type Boys' Simple... Not Easy is out now on Man In The Moon Records. They play Ronnie Scott's in London from 29 November to 1 December

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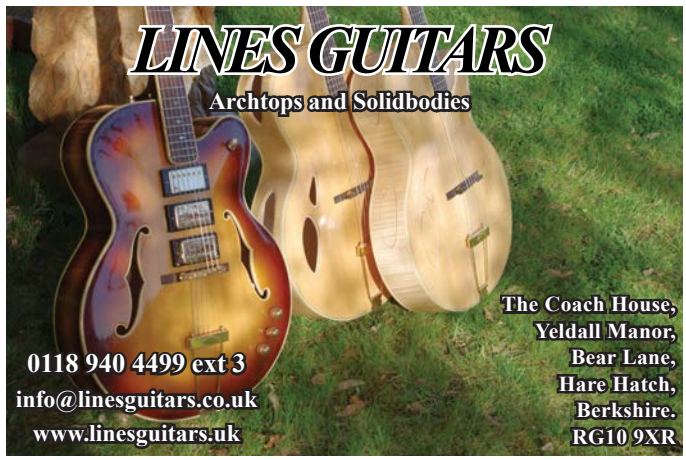

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All about... Rectification

We complete our series exploring the role of the valve in guitar amplification with a look at rectifiers. **HUW PRICE** explains the twin functions of this vital yet relatively unheralded amp component...

The word 'rectification' is used a lot in these pages. We talk about valve rectifiers, solid-state rectification and even dual rectifiers, but what does it actually mean?

The mains supply from the wall socket comes with an alternating current – AC. Guitar signal flowing through an amp also has an alternating current, so as far as your amp is concerned the raw wall supply is both power and noise. Nevertheless, amps need power, so the 'noise' element must be eliminated. That means the wall AC has to be converted to a direct current – DC. No amplitude means no noise. For the most part, the conversion process takes place within a section of the amplifier known as the power supply.

Typically, a handful of components are used in the power supply. The mains is connected to a power transformer that will have output taps for the various voltages needed for different functions within the amp.

Every guitar amp has a rectifier. It generally raises voltage levels and begins the AC to DC conversion

The highest voltage taps, which are typically higher than the mains voltage, are connected to the rectifier. The rectifier's output connects to a network of dropping resistors and capacitors and, all being well, the power supply output will be clean and silent DC.

Every guitar amp has a rectifier, and its role is twofold. It generally raises voltage levels and begins the AC to DC conversion process. The simplest 'half wave' rectifiers simply block either the negative or positive phases of the cycle. Full wave rectifiers create a constant polarity, so the positive and negative cycles all become fully positive (or fully negative).

The rectifier output is actually a pulse, which is then smoothed to flat DC by the filter capacitors. Although there are various methods of rectification, those found in guitar and bass amps fall into two broad categories – valve and solid-state. Let's take a closer look at each type.

Valve rectifiers

We've investigated pentode, tetrode and triode valves over recent issues, but so far we haven't mentioned diode valves. Even so, many amplifiers will have one as the rectifier. Since all valves were diodes up until the triode was invented, they were simply called rectifiers.

The simplest diode valves have no control or suppressor grids, just a heater, cathode and anode.

AC from the transformer is connected between the anode and cathode. The heated cathode releases electrons and when the AC is in its positive phase, the plate attracts the electrons and current flows. When the anode is negatively charged, no electrons are attracted and no current flows. So diodes allow current to flow in one direction but not the other – just like a non-return valve in a water pipe. That's why the term 'valve' was coined, and it's why Americans have a valid point when they say it's archaic when applied to triodes, pentodes and so forth. Incidentally, diode valves were also used to form logic gates, so they were pivotal in the development of computing.

Solid-state rectifiers

Solid-state (or semiconductor) diodes are just as old as diode valves. However, they remained less stable than valves for quite some time. Manufacturing technology improved and reliable long-life diodes were eventually developed, so solid-state rectification became commonplace in guitar amps.

Solid-state diodes are tiny in comparison to diode valves, many seem to last indefinitely and they simplify the manufacturing process because they don't need a separate heater supply and specially designed power transformers. They're also significantly cheaper.

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Ultimately, a solid-state diode has an anode and a cathode, just like a diode valve, and in a rectifier configuration they do exactly the same job.

Rectifiers and tone

It has often been said that rectifiers have no effect on tone because they are not in the signal path. The second part of that is true, but the first part is more complex, and much depends on how you conceive 'tone'.

Sound and tone are much like resistance and impedance. In some regards, they are the same, and the terms we use to measure or define them are often identical. However tone, like impedance, is a more complex phenomenon.

My perspective is that tone obviously means sound, but it also encompasses dynamic response, breakup characteristics, transient response and bass frequency definition. While the rectifier doesn't necessarily influence the 'sound', it impacts everything else. The simplistic 'valves are good and solid state is bad' cliché doesn't apply to rectification. It all depends on the type of response you want from your amplifier. The technical 'failings' of valve rectifiers are the very reason that so many guitarists prefer them.

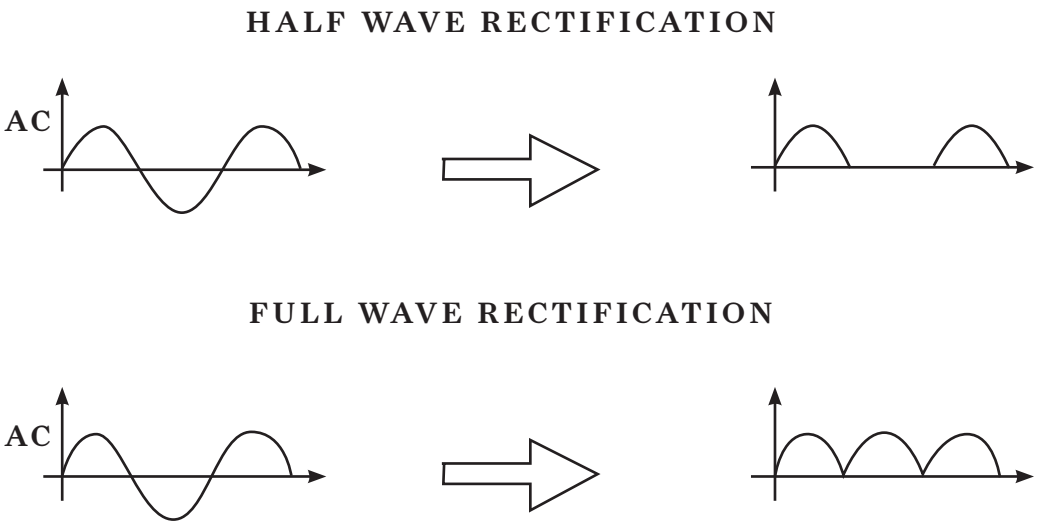
The technical 'failings' of valve rectifiers are the very reason many guitarists prefer them

Michael Soldano explains the 'technical shortcomings' of valve rectifiers: "A tube rectifier has internal resistance. The more current that travels through a tube rectifier, the more the voltage drops. When the voltage drops, the power of the amplifier drops. The tube rectifier has the drawback of not being able to provide a consistent voltage when it's under load."

You may not notice any difference between solid-state and valve rectification when you're playing quietly. However, if you crank up a valve-rectified amp and hit a powerchord, the internal voltages drop with the extra current demand and the dynamic range of the amp is reduced. This is commonly called 'sag', a form of compression that can make an amp feel touch sensitive and smooth. It's a characteristic of countless vintage amps, and players who are used to rectifier sag often find it hard to play without it. The downside is that the bass end can be spongy and lacking in definition. In contrast, solid-state rectifier diodes have no internal resistance, so there is no current limiting and they can deliver a constant supply of voltage regardless of demand.

Tighter and punchier amps are required for more aggressive styles such as modern rock and metal, so that's why amps with solid-state rectification are more popular with heavy-rock players. The transient response is quicker and the tone more consistent.

When valve rectifiers sag and voltages drop, there can be a subtle change in sound. Preamp and power valves may distort quicker at lower voltages with some diminution in treble response that adds a certain sweetness. As the transient attack is reduced and the level drops, you can hear a 'bloom' effect as held notes seem to sustain longer because volume increases as voltage levels recover. Experienced players who are into this kind of thing will dial in an amp to exploit those characteristics – in effect playing the amp as well as the guitar.



Rectifier mods

Not all rectifier valves are equal. The common complaint about current ones is they're not as reliable or durable as vintage versions. What's more, they all put out different voltages, so one GZ34 will probably be different to another GZ34 – even if they're the same brand. Internal voltages have a bearing on tone, so the simplest mod is to try a bunch of rectifiers of the specified type.

Most rectifiers fit octal sockets, so some are interchangeable. Some players will replace the stock 5Y3 rectifier in medium-sized tweed amps with a GZ34 (aka 5AR4) to increase clean headroom and tighten up the bass. The 5V4 is another popular option, but you may want to have the bias checked with a new rectifier installed. If you want more sag, you can sometimes install a lower-rated rectifier valve. Some have tried 5Y3s and 5V4s in Princeton-style amps to make them less stiff, but if you're considering rectifier swaps, they must be compatible and capable of meeting the amp's current draw. The rectifier itself draws current from the power transformer, so make sure it's not going to be excessive.

Often, the safest way to determine these things is to consult old-fashioned tube charts. Total up the current draw of the preamp and power valves and compare that figure with the current rating of the rectifier valve. If the current draw exceeds the maximum for that rectifier, you can't use it. If you really need to tighten up a valve-rectified amp, or simply avoid having to buy a valve rectifier again, you might consider installing a solid-state rectifier. Some, such as Weber Copper Caps, are designed to emulate the sag characteristics of the valves they're replacing and they even have a warm-up time, so they're safe to use with non-standby amps. Others, such as the Mojotone Solid State Rectifier and the Yellow Jackets YJR, slot straight into a rectifier valve socket to provide solid-state rectifier performance without having to modify the amp.

Converting from solid-state to valve rectification is impractical because you'll have to install a new power transformer as well as another valve socket. Some builders simulate valve sag by soldering a 'sag resistor' between the output of a solid-state rectifier and the first filter capacitor.

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EL34-M	£19.20	£21.60	6V6GT-R	£19.20	£21.60
EL84-S	£14.40	£16.80	6V6GT-S	£24.00	£26.40

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Chord Clinic

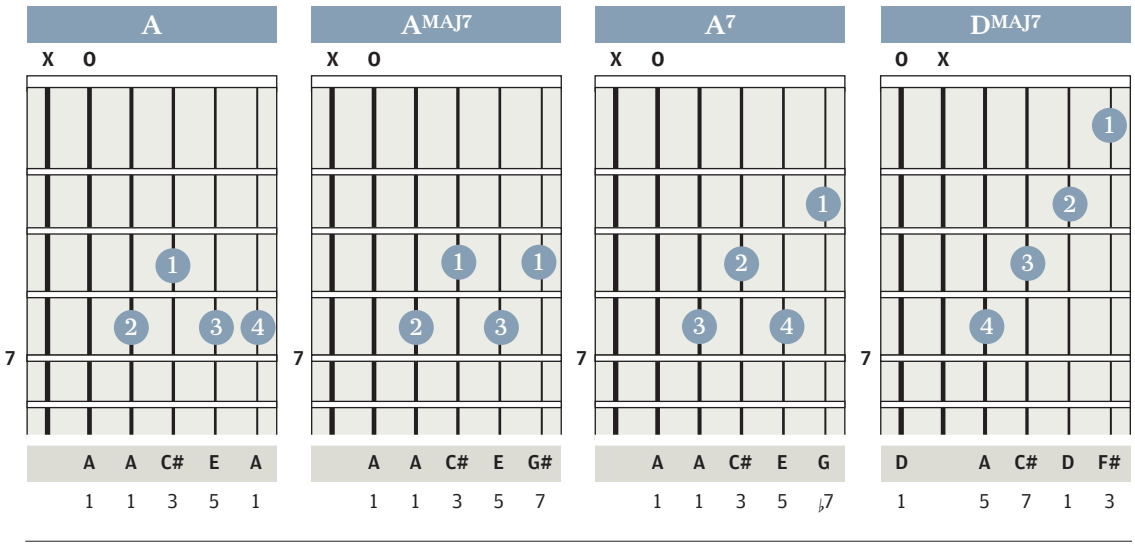
In our third and final instalment on DADGAD tuning, we take a look at closely spaced voicings and suspensions. **ROD FOGG** is talking 'bout a resolution...

The whole-tone interval that comes between the second and third strings in DADGAD opens up a range of interesting options for voicing chords, which would be impossible in standard tuning. Take a look at figure 1; the first two chords could be arranged on a standard-tuned guitar without much trouble. The third chord would be something of a stretch, and the fourth chord completely impossible. Try playing these four chords as a descending sequence and then alternate between the Bm and E7 chords a couple of times before going back to the top. On the B minor chord, we are stopping two strings with the second finger, but you could also try stopping the bottom three strings with your third finger in a barre; do whichever one you find most comfortable.

Fingerpicking a sequence like this is worth a try, as you can bring out both the descending line on the top string and the crunchy C and D on the second and third strings in the D major seventh chord, which is a good example of the close voicings that come naturally in this tuning. In the B minor chord, play the B in the bass on the sixth or fourth strings and take the option not to bother too much about the F#.

Last month, we mentioned that minor chords don't seem to fall under the fingers so well in DADGAD. Figure 2 casts doubt upon the accuracy of this statement with four A minor-centred chords that work well as two alternating pairs. You can play them in any order you like, as both pairs contain a relatively normal minor seventh or ninth

Fig 1 Slipping down



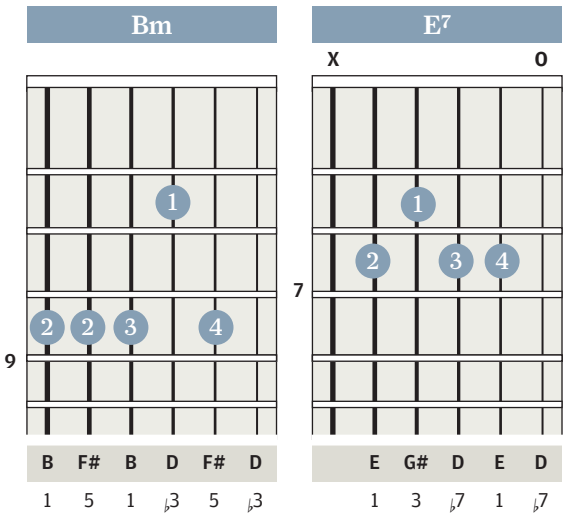


Fig 2 Slipping up

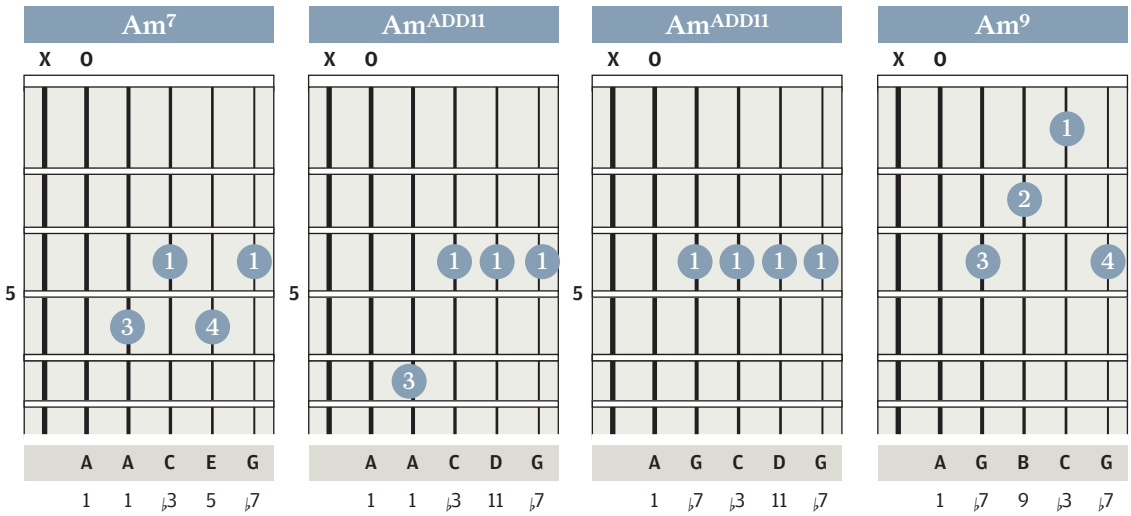
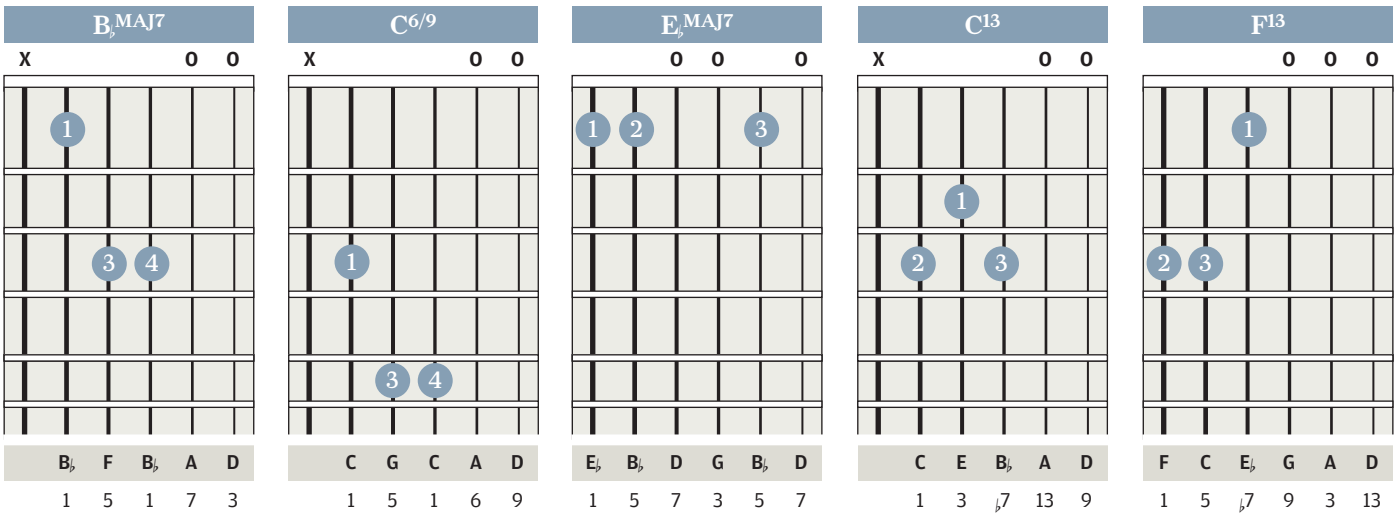


Fig 3 Sliding fives



alternating with a chord with an added 11. These chords have a 'suspended' quality because the 11th is the same note as the fourth, which you find in suspended fourth chords. However, here we have the added tension of the 11th (D) sounding against the minor third (C). Notice that the B and C in the Am9 chord are only a semitone apart on adjacent strings – a voicing not easy to recreate in standard tuning.

Figure 3 begins with a dreamy B♭ major seven chord, made possible by the presence of high open A and D strings. Looked at a different way, this is just a B♭ five chord with some added open strings, and who can resist the temptation to slide a five chord around the guitar and see what happens? We haven't written out all the possibilities of this shape, but at the third fret there is a nice C6/9 that works well just moving back and forth between the two chords. Slide it up to the fifth fret and you get a ringing D5 all across the guitar (you can add the low D on the sixth string). Try it anywhere, and you might be surprised how good it sounds against the open top two strings. At the second fret, which we seem to have managed to ignore up to now, there is an easy and useful Bm7 chord; try substituting this one for the tricky Bm we saw in figure 1.

If we take that B♭ major 7 chord in a different direction, it would be nice to follow it up with an equally dreamy E♭maj7, the version here being a slightly more turgid alternative to the one we saw in a previous Chord Clinic.

It would probably be best to concentrate your strumming on the upper notes rather than the bottom three strings. When you get tired of B♭maj7 and E♭maj7, try the C13 and F13 chords and they'll turn you round to go back to B♭.

In figure 4, we return to minor chords and close voicings, starting with an atmospheric Gmadd9 with a semitone between the minor third and the added ninth. This chord works well followed by the Cmadd9, which is voiced to contain the same semitone interval. Played back and forth, they make a cool two-bar groove. It's hard to resist the temptation to derive some other minor chords from the Cmadd9, and the next two shapes experiment with both a major seventh and a minor seventh, which work well as a descending sequence starting from the Cmadd9.

Here's a challenge for you – can you go back to the Gmadd9 and take the note on the fourth string down a semitone to F# to produce Gm9maj7? If you then take it down to F (third fret) you will have Gm9, and if you go one fret further to E at the second fret you will have a chord of Gm6/9, which will alternate very nicely with the final chord in >

Fig 4 Minor moves

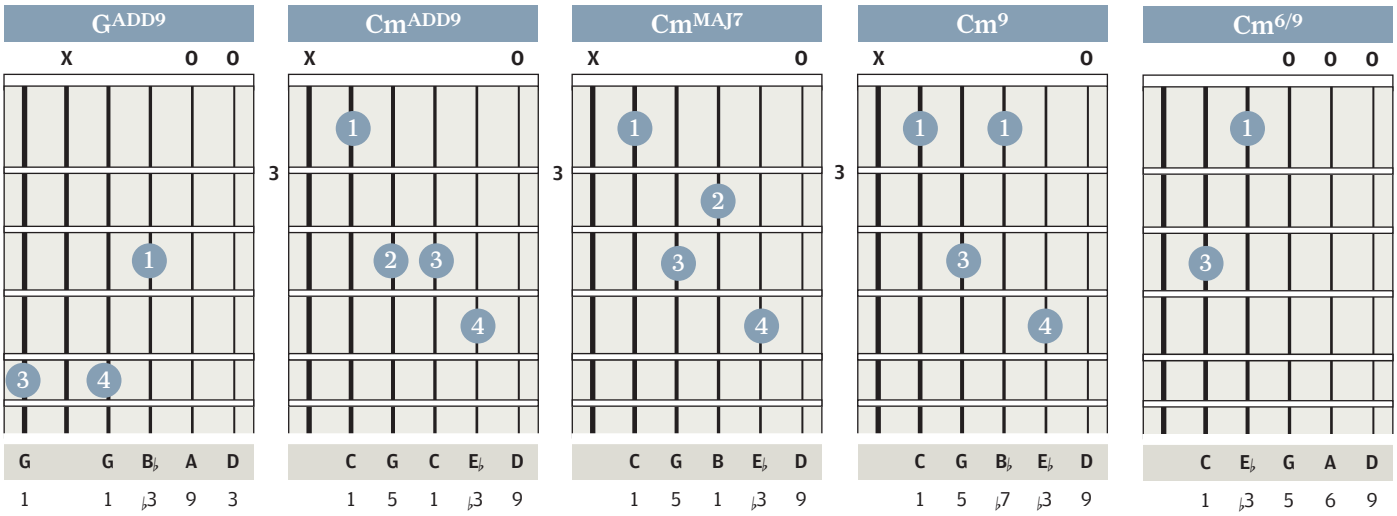


Fig 5 Nine lives

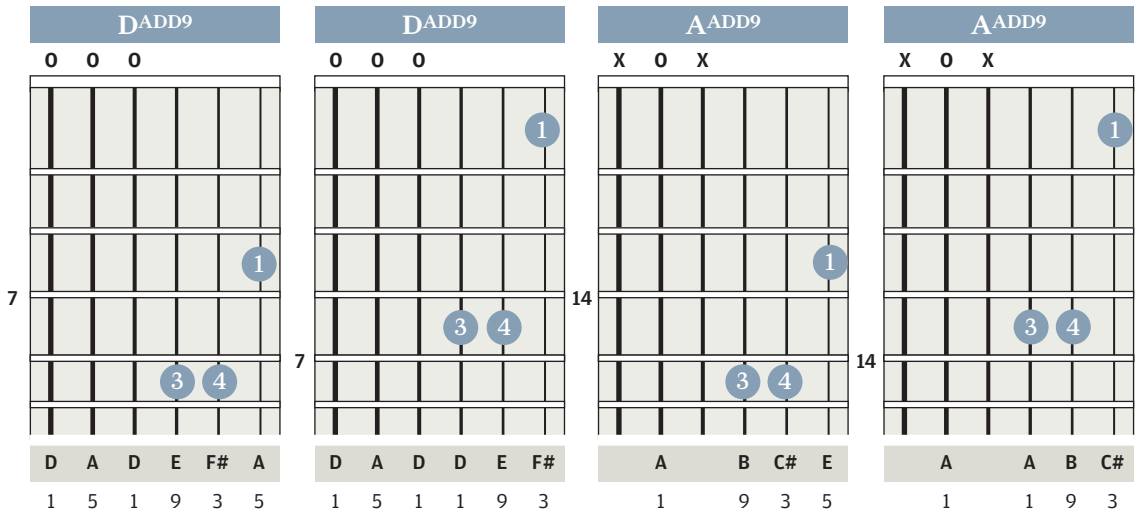


figure 4, an easy Cm6/9; notice how adding the sixth to a minor chord always seems to add a hint of mystery and tension.

As an antidote to the sombre minor-key qualities of figures 2 and 4, we have some bright and chiming added ninth chords in figure 5. You will need a cutaway and accurate fingering to play the two A chords – though it is just about possible on a guitar with a 14th-fret neck join. See how closely spaced the upper notes of these chords are; the second and fourth chords contain notes that are a whole tone apart, the same as the first three notes of a major scale. You can strum these shapes, but it might be interesting to fingerpick individual notes and bass notes and listen out for any melodies that emerge. These chords contain a major pentatonic scale, a trusted friend of folk and country musicians, and you may find the sounds of dirt roads and windswept prairies emerging from your guitar.

That brings us to the end of our DADGAD exploration. It is weird and wonderful, different, and yet strangely versatile – and enables you to do things that are impossible in standard tuning. We hope you've been inspired to give it a try and will maybe come up with some DADGAD chord sequences of your own. See you next month.

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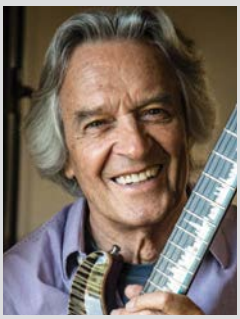
Fretbuzz

Your letters. This month: John McLaughlin and know your outer from inner foils on signal capacitors...

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Right time, wrong place



Dear *G&B*,

I read your article about John McLaughlin [October 2016] with a feeling of almost jealous astonishment about the start and progression of his career.

In my youth, in Liverpool, I was taken by The Beatles and the subsequent Mersey beat boom, and I too jumped on the bandwagon (no pun intended!) and obtained my first guitar. It was a battered Spanish nylon string (yes, my fingers still bled!) given to me by my dustcart-driver uncle, who had rescued it from some budding failed guitarist's bin. I, like every other guitarist in the world, struggled through my first three chords accompanied by constant banging on the wall by my philistine neighbour, with shouts of "FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, PLAY SOMETHING ELSE!". Eventually, I progressed to better guitars, ranging from an Eko acoustic up to a genuine Hofner Club 50, as played by The Beatles – yeah, really!

Now, I'd like to tell you that my guitar-playing career, like John's, took off to stratospheric heights but no, a mate of mine loaned me a copy of *Love, Devotion And Surrender* by 'John What's His Name?' and 'Carlos San Who?'. I was done for! I had never liked jazz (my dad played it constantly!) and didn't particularly crave for the Indian influence, but I could not, however much I tried, reproduce the phrasing, speed, style, tonality and sheer brilliance that was slapping my face every time I played that record. I was so blown away, the Hofner was sold (yes, we've all been there, the guitar we wish we still had!) and in a time of turmoil it was replaced by a beat-up Rosetti Bass 9, and I was relegated to the back of the band! I had been thinking of buying a Rickenbacker 325, and we had four rhythm guitarists, so something had to give.

Although my musical skills were forged in the musical cauldron eminating from the Cavern, just look at who John played with: Alexis Korner, John Mayall, Jagger, Watts, Bruce and Davies. Then, for good measure, throw in Georgie Fame, Graham Bond, Jimmy Page, Brian Auger, etc, etc, ad infinitum. Oh yeah, Miles Davis, too!

40 years or so on, I read the article and it struck me where I'd gone wrong. I WAS IN THE WRONG PLACE! So, all I have to do now is get all of the above in one place, jam, record and gig for about five years and then I'll be ready! Total respect to the man, but look out Mr McLaughlin, I'm a-coming!

Mike Rostock, via email

***G&B* Thanks for your letter, Mike. Just ask yourself, would being an internationally respected virtuoso with a glittering recording career really make you happy? Erm...**

WRITTEN A LETTER OF THE MONTH?

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Chris Fantana from Rift Amps demonstrates a simple method to identify the outer foil on capacitors

Catch my Rift?

Dear *G&B*,

You mentioned the term 'outer foil' in your article on Rift Amps, and I've seen it on some capacitors. What does it actually mean, and why is it important?

Steve Carpenter, via email

G&B, Huw Price writes:* *One of the (many) things we learned during our recent visit to Rift Amps was the importance of identifying and correctly orienting the outer foil of signal capacitors. We had seen outer foil markings on some capacitors but never given it much thought.

If you check out some of the 'make your own capacitor' videos on YouTube, you'll see that two layers of metal foil, separated by a non-conductive material, are rolled together to form a tube. Inevitably, one foil layer ends up on the inside and the other is on the outside.

According to Aiken Amps, correctly orienting capacitors makes amplifiers "much less susceptible to outside noise, including hum, interference from fluorescent lighting and tendency towards oscillations or frequency-response peaks and dips due to unwanted feedback from nearby signals within the amplifier".

There is a simple method to check capacitors with outer foil markings to confirm they're correct and test capacitors with no markings to identify the outer foil.

Plug a cable into a guitar amplifier and take two lengths of wire with crocodile clips attached to each end – one black and one red. Clip the red wire onto the tip of the jack plug and the black one onto the sleeve, then attach the other crocodile clips to the capacitor leads.

Now pinch the capacitor body with your forefinger and thumb to see if it causes a hum. If it doesn't, or you're not sure, swap over the capacitor connections and test it again. When you've identified which end of the capacitor generates the most hum when

connected to the jack tip, mark it as the outer foil connection.

The rule is to connect the outer foil of the capacitor so it's closest to ground. So, if you're connecting a signal capacitor between the plate of V1 and the grid of V2, the outer foil goes on the plate side. Similarly, coupling capacitors between the phase inverter valve and the power valve grids should be connected with the outer foil towards the phase inverter.

If you think this might become a regular thing for you, it's worth wiring up a jack plug with crocodile clip leads as a permanent capacitor testing tool. Apparently, there are benefits to be had from properly orienting tone capacitors in guitars, too, but that's another story...

HAVE YOUR SAY! Write to us via snail mail, *Guitar & Bass, Anthem Publishing, Suite 6 Piccadilly House, London Road, Bath BA1 6PL* or email **guitarandbass@anthem-publishing.com.** Alternatively, get in touch via social media on Facebook or Twitter.

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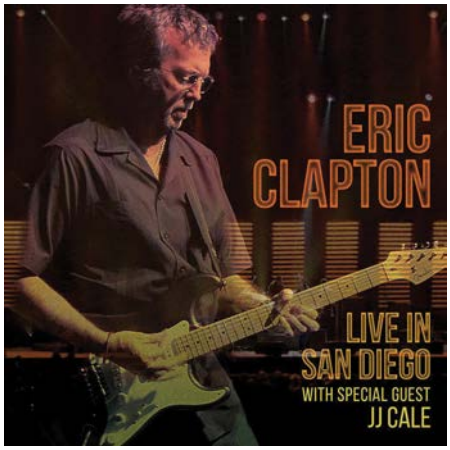
New music

We round up and rate a selection of this month's guitar-driven album releases and reissues



Eric Clapton

LIVE IN SAN DIEGO WITH JJ CALE

Recorded in 2007 at San Diego's iPayOne Center during the Doyle & Derek World Tour, this 16-song set was particularly special for Clapton, as it saw him united on stage with one of his long-time friends, JJ Cale – the Tulsa Sound pioneer whom Clapton idolised, and who sadly passed away in 2013. The pair play a loping five-song segment in the middle of the gig, with covers of Cale-penned classics *After Midnight* and *Cocaine*, which have the party's host audibly beaming. Upside-down stringer Doyle Bramhall II and extraordinary slide merchant Derek Trucks provide superlative backing, and the audience is spoilt further when Robert Cray joins the band for a rip-roaring version of *Crossroads*. This may be, incredibly, Clapton's 13th live album, but it's definitely one of his best. **CM**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *JJ Cale, The Allman Brothers Band*

Public Service Broadcasting

LIVE AT BRIXTON

Public Service Broadcasting bring their mix of atmospheric electronic music, samples from historical archives and accessible, poppy prog-rock to London's Brixton Academy for their first live CD/DVD. Playing the venue was a long-held ambition fulfilled for PSB frontman J Willgoose Esq, and the whole show – with accompanying strings, brass, a choir and guest musicians – is a pyrotechnic and visual treat for the audience. Musically, their sound has always fearlessly incorporated rock and electronic elements, along with the samples that gave the band their name. Live, guitar-driven songs such as *Spitfire* from debut album *Inform-Educate-Entertain*, and *Sputnik* and *Gagarin* from 2015's *The Race For Space* hit home with far more power and urgency than on those records. **CM**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Porcupine Tree, Errors*

The Band

THE LAST WALTZ 40TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTORS EDITION

Now 40 years on from this epochal swansong show by The Band, those familiar with the Martin Scorsese-directed documentary or original soundtrack album will already know this is an embarrassment of riches. The big-name special guests give this lavish concert an added frisson, of course, including Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Dr John and Bob Dylan, but The Band themselves are on stellar form throughout. Highlights abound, with Ronnie Hawkins joining his former charges for *Who Do You Love*, Muddy Waters rocking the joint on *Mannish Boy* and an astonishing guitar duel between Robbie Robertson and an effortless Eric Clapton on *Further On Up The Road*. A plethora of bonus tracks make this special edition the definitive document of a musical milestone. **SH**

9/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Bob Dylan, Wilco*

Glenn Hughes

RESONATE

While he may rein in the vocal acrobatics here, the former Deep Purple bassist/co-frontman makes up for it with a high riff count on his 12th solo album. The opener, *Heavy,* is a statement of intent and Soren Andersen's sludgy overdriven guitar on *Flow* could almost be Black Sabbath, but *Resonate* is at its best when some slinkiness is injected into proceedings, such as on the funky *Landmines*. **SH**

7/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Living Colour, Ozzy Osbourne*

The Trouble With Templeton

SOMEDAY, BUDDY

This second album from the Brisbane band showcases vocalist Thomas Calder's tender falsetto. *Sailor* and the swirling, affecting *Double Life* are evocative of Jeff Buckley, while *Vernon* and *Complex Lips* take a darker approach to the sort of anthemic alt-rock Weezer purveyed in their pomp. Throughout, adroit songwriting is backed by sparse arrangements and thoughtful guitar playing. **GW**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Jeff Buckley, Cold War Kids*

Hiss Golden Messenger

HEART LIKE A LEVEE

Heart Like A Levee's excellent opener *Biloxi* is a close relative of Bob Dylan's *Tangled Up In Blue*, but it's a red herring on a richly diverse album. MC Taylor's compositions are mined from the finest seams of Americana and country-soul. The infectiously funky *Like A Mirror Loves A Hammer* crackles with devilishly fuzzed-up tremolo, while *Cracked Windshield* is an achingly beautiful acoustic and piano ballad. One of *G&B*'s albums of 2016. **GW**

9/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Bob Dylan, Van Morrison*

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JOEL STROETZEL

"My Spinal Tap moment..."

The rhythm powerhouse from Massachusetts metalcore outfit Killswitch Engage holds court

1 I couldn't live without my...
"Maxon OD808 overdrive. We use it for everything, really. Overdubs, rhythm tone... in every other project I play in back home, regardless of the style of music, I use it. It's a phenomenal overdrive pedal. We tend to play with higher-gain tube amps and sometimes it gets a little flubby – the OD808 tightens things up."

2 In another life I would be...
"I was always into art and wanted to be an artist growing up. Painting, sketching, sculpting. All that stuff."

3 The moment that started it all...
"I started playing piano when I was, like, seven years old. A couple of years went by and I heard *Welcome To The Jungle* by Guns N' Roses. I was like, 'Mom, I want a guitar now! I can't do that on the piano...'"

4 The one that got away...
"Almost 20 years ago, my friend bought one of those ESP Kirk Hammett ouija board guitars when they did a limited run. He was like, 'I'll give it to you for a thousand bucks'. I backed out at the last minute and now they go for, like, $8,000..."

5 My Spinal Tap moment...
"When we played Download in 2014, Adam's [Dutkiewicz, lead guitar] guitar didn't work for pretty much the entire set. His amp went down, his guitar went down. He was pretty much just running around drinking beer and yelling at people."

6 The best advice I was ever given...
"I remember Lemmy saying in an interview that you've gotta pick between rock 'n' roll and family. It's a tough balance. I've been married for 10 years and I always miss my family and friends. I can see why it doesn't work for a lot of people. It's a fun life if you like it, but it's not for everybody. Adjusting when you get back from a tour – there's a few days when you just don't know what to do with yourself."

7 The first thing I play when I pick up a guitar...
"I don't have a set warm-up, I usually just noodle around. I'm kind of finicky about tuning. I'll pick up a guitar, jam and whatever comes out, comes out. I'm more into tone than technique."

8 The most important thing on my rider...
"Beer!"

9 My guiltiest musical pleasure...
"I'm a fucking huge Prince fan, and I was really kind of devastated by his passing. I remember going to see Prince in 2000 when I had long hair and was wearing a Cannibal Corpse shirt! But he was like the 80s Hendrix. He was just great at everything."

10 If I could learn to play one thing...
"I always wish I could play pedal steel guitar, but I've never had the patience for it. I have lap guitars, I have a B-Bender Telecaster, but pedal steel... I'm not sure it's a road I want to try to go down!"

Photo by Jordan Curtis Hughes

Stand Out in the Crowd

System 10 Stompbox Digital Wireless Guitar System

The innovative digital wireless guitar system from Audio-Technica that fits right on your pedal board. Pair up to 8 guitars with separate body pack transmitters for easy on stage changeovers, and either mute, tune or use a second rig with the A-B switching. With a discreet clip bodypack, sturdy metal pedal casing, and no large intrusive aerials, it is ready to go straight from the box to the stage. Operating on the 2.4GHz range, it is also both interference and wireless license free.

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Guitar
&Bass
2017
CALENDAR

Fender Deluxe
FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA
VOLUME
TONE

A 1959 Fender Jazzmaster and 5E3 Deluxe amplifier from the same year

Guitar & Bass

December 2016

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
			1	2 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 04 on sale UK	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25 CHRISTMAS DAY
26 BOXING DAY	27	28	29	30	31	

GRETSCH
GRETSCH
Bigsby

A 1958 Gretsch Country Club in Cadillac Green owned by Joe Bonamassa

Guitar & Bass

January

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
						1 UK Bank Holiday NEW YEAR'S DAY
2	3	4	5	6 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 05 on sale UK	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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Amplifiers
Basses
Cellos
WORLD-FAMOUS
QUALITY
SINCE
1873

February

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		1	2	3 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 06 on sale UK	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

Vintage Rickenbackers adorn the wall of
Gruhn Guitars in Nashville, Tennessee

Guitar & Bass

March

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		1	2	3 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 07 on sale UK	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26 BRITISH SUMMER TIME BEGINS
27	28	29	30	31		

A wonderful 1939 Gibson L-00 from the golden era
of American acoustic guitar manufacture

Guitar & Bass

April

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 08 on sale UK	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 UK Bank Holiday GOOD FRIDAY	15	16
17 UK Bank Holiday EASTER MONDAY	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

FENDER

Joe Bonamassa's 1951 Fender Nocaster (left)
alongside the '52 Tele he bought from Terry Reid

Guitar & Bass

May

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1 UK Bank Holiday MAY DAY	2	3	4	5 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 09 on sale UK	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 UK Bank Holiday SPRING HOLIDAY	30	31				

GRETSCH
Chet Atkins
NASHVILLE
GRETSCH
Bigsby

Gabrielle Aplin's 1960s
Gretsch Chet Atkins Nashville

Guitar & Bass

June

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
			1	2 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 10 on sale UK	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Andrew Raymond's 1959 Gibson
Les Paul Standard aka 'Minnesota'

Guitar & Bass

July

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 11 on sale UK	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

XOA

August

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	1	2	3	4 Guitar & Bass Vol 28 Issue 12 on sale UK	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 UK Bank Holiday LATE SUMMER HOLIDAY	29	30	31			

VOX
VOLUME
TONE
TONE

A 1963 Fender Stratocaster in Sea Foam Green
resting against a 1951 TV Front Deluxe

Guitar & Bass

September

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				1 Guitar & Bass Vol 29 Issue 01 on sale UK	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

This 1978 Zemaitis was built for Vibrators guitarist Mickie Owen

October

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
						1
2	3	4	5	6 Guitar & Bass Vol 29 Issue 02 on sale UK	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29 BRITISH SUMMER TIME ENDS
30	31					

VOX

A super-clean 1956 Les Paul TV Model
leaning against a vintage Vox AC10

Guitar & Bass

November

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		1	2	3 Guitar & Bass Vol 29 Issue 03 on sale UK	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Gibson
Gibson hand made strings
SONOMAT

Two of Joe Bonamassa's Bursts - Snakebite (left) and Skinnerburst - photographed in his LA home

December

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				1 Guitar & Bass Vol 29 Issue 04 on sale UK	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26 BOXING DAY	27	28	29	30	31

December 2016

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

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